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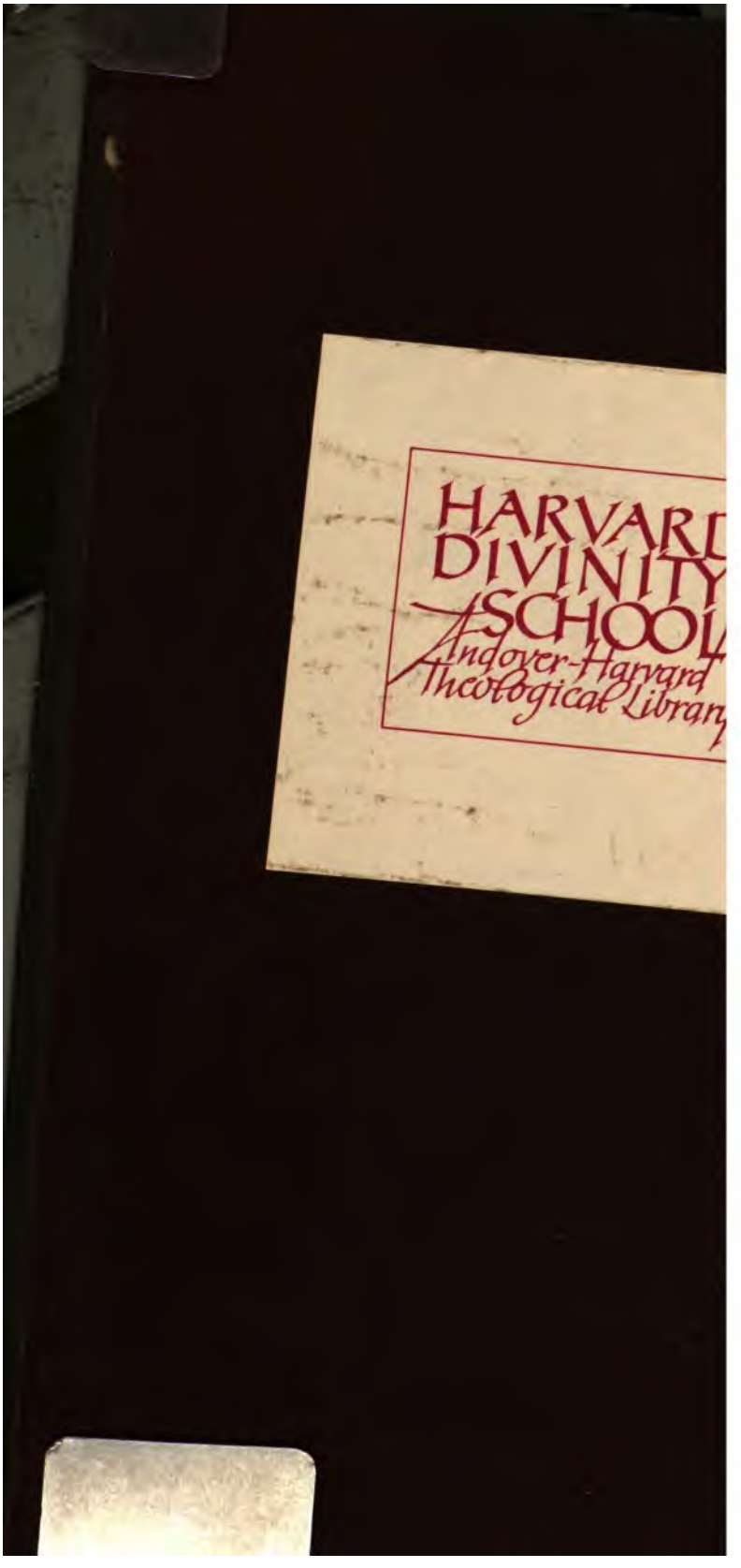
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TWENTY-FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED IN

ALL SOULS CHURCH, NEW YORK,

1865—1881.

BY

HENRY W. BELLOWS, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

1839—1882.

SELECTED AND EDITED BY HIS SON,

RUSSELL N. BELLOWS.

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THESE SERMONS

Are Respectfully Inscribed

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

TO WHOM THEY WERE ADDRESSED.

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SERMONS.

I.

SALVATION:

THE MODERN MEANING OF THE TERM.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 12, 13.

THE terms used in the New Testament concerning spiritual things require a courageous translation into their equivalent modern phrases. Nothing can be more perversive of their true significance than to insist in forcing our later and fuller-grown intelligence and moral experience back into the letter of the phrases which were appropriate and expressive of the thoughts of the sacred writers. It is not merely that the Apostles and Evangelists used words that no longer convey to us the thoughts they were urging upon contemporaries; but the thoughts themselves were often not such as we can now honestly entertain. It is only the *principles* of which their thoughts were the local or timely expression that we can consider permanently the same and equally important now as then.

The term SALVATION is one of the significant words on which they dwelt with peculiar emphasis,

and with meanings that have passed away. It covers an eternal principle which requires now a fresh expression. So far as the Apostles felt and urged the importance of escape from the condemnation and curse of God, and from the loss of the soul through disobedience to the Divine will and rejection of the light of the Gospel, they felt and urged a truth which has just as much urgency to-day as in their own time. But their notions of the nature of the soul's danger, the curse of the Law, the mediation and redemption of the Gospel, were such as our modern thought and experience do not permit us to accept. The very word *curse* connected with the Divine nature and character, as these have unfolded in our thought, has lost all applicableness. It is fully warranted by Old and New Testament usage, but it is not warranted by modern thought. There are awful penalties inherent in the moral nature and the divine constitution of things, which darken over the lives, fortunes, and prospects of all moral defaulters and neglecters of spiritual obligations; but they are not *curses*, and do not represent the wrath, but the love of God. There are, too, inherited difficulties and disabilities growing out of our inseparable connection with our moral and spiritual ancestry, which still make generations suffer from the misdeeds, moral ignorance, and sinfulness of their progenitors. There are still hereditary sin and hereditary piety and goodness; and we are now able to recognize the wisdom and mercy that bind up the successive generations of the race

in common responsibilities and in common sorrows and blessings. The world and each generation in it gain far more than they lose by the law of heredity, which extends alike to what is good and bad, though from the nature of things it is far more operative in the sphere of good than in the sphere of evil; otherwise the race would be destined, not to moral progress, but to steady moral decline.

But it is clear enough that the Apostles thought this world so bad and so hopeless, that they believed it given over to speedy destruction; that only a remnant of it were or would become subjects of Divine favor, or participators in the salvation which they proclaimed. The Old Testament had presented an analogous catastrophe in the deluge. The race of Adam had become so corrupt and hopeless, that a bare remnant of it was worth saving to begin a new world with. The rest were drowned, as their fit punishment and elimination from the problem. So, in the New Testament times after Christ's withdrawal, the Apostles saw so little prospect of any general triumph of the principles of Christian faith and virtue, that they imagined God's patience as just going to give out; that the end of the world was at hand; that fire would do again what water had done once; that the wicked and worldly-minded and unbelieving would be destroyed in one vast catastrophe, and the saints, the few sincere believers in Christ and holiness, would rise from the dead, or come from

their suffering stations on earth if still alive, and meet the returning Christ, who would at once create a new heavens and a new earth, and begin a reign of peace and glory, to last for a thousand years at least.

We can easily see what Salvation meant to them, with such an awful fate so immediately threatening the race and the society about them. How urgent it must have seemed, and how explicit and literal its meaning! It was not some general and indefinite evil, or future fate of moral self-injury, or lack of spiritual growth, or decay of virtue, that they foresaw. It was an entire destruction, as by an invading army, or a pestilence, or an earthquake, or a conflagration, which was to fall on all who were not wholly joined by faith and confidence to Christ. He was a Saviour in no such general sense as that of a moral and spiritual educator, by his example and precepts and spirit, as we see him to be. He was a Saviour resembling rather a triumphant and heroic general who comes by a forced march to relieve a garrison shut up to hopeless starvation or ruin from overwhelming foes, and who breaks the siege, routs and destroys the foe, and looses and rewards the brave and nearly perished prisoners. We cannot do any justice to the term Saviour, or the term Salvation, as used in the New Testament, by forcing our modern conceptions on the old phrases. Nor can we do any justice to the truth as we now perceive it, by trying to bring it under the protection and authority of these ancient meanings,

except in so far as the principles are involved which ever remain the same. The Apostles were limited in their view and their expectation. They did not anticipate the full sense in which Jesus Christ was to vindicate the name of Saviour, or realize what Salvation would come to mean in our time. They would have felt our conceptions, could they have entertained them, to be weak, indefinite, and lacking adequate motive force. And the Church, heir of its founders' feelings, has done its best to stereotype and fix in apostolic form the original theology. Paul, no doubt, had notions of Christ's mission and work which are untenable, if life, history, science, philosophy, ethics, and modern feeling have any right to be independent critics and to insist that no statements of man's relations to God and destiny made eighteen hundred years ago can be considered as final in their form and in their details. We may play at attempted reconcilements between Old or New Testament ideas, threats, promises, and prophecies, and the facts and feelings of modern life; but when we are in dead earnest and fearless in our consecration to truth, we shall see that there is no escape from the confession that we cannot surrender our intellectual, moral, and spiritual experience to any external authority whatsoever, and that it is much more honest and really more reverential to the God of all truth and goodness frankly to say, "The Apostles thought thus and so; they were exalted, faithful, and noble saints, and we owe them all reverence and gratitude; but they lived

long before the light that lights modern thinkers and strivers came into the world; and we dare not say that we do not see where they were mistaken, limited, less reverent to the Divine character and justice, and less intelligent of the Divine method, than we have become through the heritage of eighteen centuries of Christian meditation and experience."

Now, what is Salvation, in the only sense in which we can desire it, or entertain it, or reconcile our present light with the idea of it? We are no longer believers, as the Apostles were, in a Church that is to be saved and a world that is to be lost; in a select company of people who, for certain professions of faith, are to be badged and ticketed through the death-line and rescued from a fate to which the residue of mankind are to be left hopeless and final victims.

We know no heaven and hell such as they believed in. Of course, if we are to live again, as we confidently hope and believe, we are to live *somewhere* in space and time; but we see no more reason to believe that there the good and bad will be locally separated, as a few criminals are here cooped up in state-prisons, while the law-abiding are left at large, than we see reason to believe that finally here on earth the good and bad will be locally separated, and all the bad sent to some sort of huge Botany-Bay, while the good are kept in some vast earthly Sanitarium or Paradise. We see that heaven and hell are not things of place, but, so far as they are

credible at all, are states of mind, which may exist in close juxtaposition, — two people in the same household living one in hell and one in heaven, because possessing nearly opposite affections and dispositions, one being loving, lovely, and blessed, the other hateful, hating, and wretched.

No doubt the Apostles had a very strong conception of the virtuous and holy character essential to the believers whom they thought the only salvable persons. But it is equally to be confessed that they had only a dim conception of the number and variety of qualities, capacities, and forms of development and discipline — in short, of the culture, balance, tastes, and habits — that enter into our idea of human perfectness, considered as an ideal toward which we are all to be pressing. Indeed, in that respect, the Hebrews, who are our religious ancestors, and whose feelings and notions prevailed in the New Testament types, were somewhat behind the Greeks and Romans, but especially the Greeks. For the sake of emphasizing what is doubtless the highest and noblest thing in human character, *righteousness*, the Hebrews overlooked or depreciated the importance of general culture, and did injustice to the claims of human nature, both in its largeness and variety and the mutual dependence of all its parts.

Happily the race is too much scattered, and too widely separated by language and space, to allow any conspiracy of error or one-sidedness long to prevail, even if it reigns among the most favored peo-

ples for a time. No narrow or fanatical conceptions of the Divine character, or of human nature and human destiny, or of the true type of perfect manhood, can ever be crowded upon our total humanity. Genius, poetry, freedom, wisdom, protest; and the intercourse of nations, literatures, and of common life is always opposed to any tyrannical standard which has been set up by bigots, or even by saints. It is very noticeable how the poetic genius of the Psalms and of Isaiah and the world-wise liberalism of the Proverbs and of Ecclesiastes have always made breathing-holes for those whom the dogmatic portions of either the Old or the New Testament would else have stifled. It is not too much to say that even modern Christians find the Psalms an antidote to the dogmatic influence of Paul's Epistles, which, left to their natural impression and influence, would have bound a new legalism upon the Church, from which indeed it has suffered until recently most cruelly, and suffers still to no inconsiderable extent.

What, then, is our modern notion of Salvation? It is of a life and character brought into harmony with the Divine Image or Original. It is that ordering and subordination of the faculties of our nature which brings them into their normal relation to their origin and goal, — the inspiration, guide, and reward of their obedient posture and their right working. The saved man, from our modern point of view, is the man who, distinctly recognizing the true goal of his being, which is likeness to God, is following the direct road to his destination with all

diligence, with all his powers concentrated and economized in the pursuit of that human perfection which is the result of a full employment of his faculties fitly subordinated, the lower serving the higher and the higher the highest. The lost man is the man who has no goal and follows no way; who wanders aimlessly about, indulging his caprices, giving himself up to immediate gratification, having no errand, no urgent journey, no chosen and preferred purpose that governs his conduct and guides his way. The saved man is saved because his life and character are in accord with the law and spirit of the universe into which he has entered. The lost man is lost because he is at discord with the universe, — out of harmony with the permanent and eternal order of things. The saved man is saved because he is at peace with God; the lost man is lost because he is at enmity with God.

A plant that has its root in the ground, its stalk and leaves in the air, where it is fed by light and dew while it draws sap from the soil, is, other things being equal, a saved plant. It is in right relations with Nature and can profit by her laws. But a plant which by accident or overthrow has its roots in the air and its stalk and leaves in the mire is lost and dies. Man is saved when his aspirations and upward strivings regulate by subordination and true use his appetites and passions; when his universal and disinterested affections subdue and utilize his private inclinations; when his total powers are working cordially and in a true hierarchy of

order towards his ideal, which is God; when reason, righteousness, and love dwell together in his life and person in exquisite proportions and in perfect harmony.

Now, it may well be asked whether such an ideal of Salvation is entertained, or can be entertained, by thoughtless, undisciplined men; and if not, which certainly would have to be acknowledged as a fact, whether it can properly be substituted for, or considered as the heir and representative of, the Church — and, perhaps we ought frankly to say, the New Testament — conception. It is very easy for ignorant people to understand the threats of the criminal law; the punishment, by imprisonment and hardship, for civil and social offences; the safety of the law-abiding; the ruin and loss that fall on the disobedient. It is easy for them, in like manner, to fall under the dominion and influence of the Church system. It is positive, objective, easy to take into the imagination and mind. It says to men, You are born sinners, and have a corrupt nature, and are condemned universally from before your birth to everlasting destruction, on account of the wrath and curse which your great ancestor Adam incurred for all his race. But God has been moved to accept the mediation and sacrifice of his Son and equal, Jesus Christ, in favor of all who will trust in his merits and blood and seek to keep his precepts. You cannot earn or merit Salvation by any obedience. It is not the reordering of your desolated nature, or making yourself a fit temple

of God, that can save you; for at your best you remain a ruin. Salvation is not a state, it is an arrangement. There are terms on which it is granted, — and they are not mainly terms of conduct and character in any ordinary sense of the words. They consist in a regeneration by baptism, in an imputed, not a personal righteousness; in a security by bond and mortgage, in which Christ has pledged, and God has accepted, his blood in lieu of an obedience which man is not able to pay.

I do not for one moment insinuate that the highest and noblest conceptions of personal worth and holiness have not gone with this theory of Salvation, or that the loftiest lives of striving after perfection, upon the noblest and largest conception of human attainment, have not often attended it. But it has been *in spite* of the theory or plan of Salvation, whose chief popular merit has always been that it was not cumbered and cooled by the idealism and educational conceptions which, it is not unreasonably affirmed, lack popular attraction and power over the masses. Nor is it worth while to deny the merit and value of the old creed and ministry of the Church as a working system. In fact, it worked best for Church purposes in its crudest and most logical form. The Roman Catholic system was its truest outcome; and that conquered and saved the world, — saved it for something which ever remained incompatible with its theory and practice, — the allowance of individual freedom of conscience, an instinct or thirst which created Prot-

estantism, and which, after being alike its inspiration and its embarrassment, its soul and yet the plague of its body and form, is now destroying its creed, as the only alternative for saving its essence and cultivating its aim.

No! the translation of apostolic ideas into terms of science and forms corresponding with them, though as inevitable as the transformation of the spring into the summer and the autumn, is not yet popular or easily compatible with the success of Church institutions. Science chills the atmosphere in which Christian faith has found its easiest life. Its faith is too subjective to favor symbols and sacraments; too intellectual for the hard-working and little-thinking world; too large and comprehensive for those who sigh for a portable faith. But its difficulties, and the objections drawn from them, are precisely those which have embarrassed and been plausibly called fatal objections to the progress of political and social emancipation. It is always easier to govern men on principles and by methods that contemplate expediency and immediate success, than in view of simple truth and justice. How effective the doctrine of the divine right of kings! the divine right of feudal lords! of caste, and primogeniture! How useful the doctrine of a verbally inspired book! of an incarnate deity! the worship of saints! the mediation of the Madonna! These provisional notions, shadows, and elementary conceptions, have had their immense efficacy for good as well as evil. They have their place still. And

those who are not offended by them, and in whom they do not work unbelief and distaste for religion, (and they are still millions,) should not be upbraided, nor should they be expected to be within the reach of what I have been describing as the modern theory of Salvation. It is for that considerable and forward class who have definitively got beyond the influence of any church creed, — beyond any disposition to palter in a double sense with the Scriptures to make them agree with modern convictions and necessities of absolutely free minds, — that the notions of Salvation which are now based by thinkers on the constitution of human nature frankly observed and noted, and without any effort to reconcile them with any ecclesiastical creed, must be restated from the Liberal pulpit.

But why, it may be justly asked, embarrass the subject of moral and spiritual, any more than of intellectual and scientific education, with forms of faith and religious usages? Why not frankly abandon the word "Salvation," as having exhausted its elasticity by long extension, and substitute for it "symmetrical culture," or "orderly development of our complete humanity"? That is evidently what Liberal religionists are driving at. That is what they are striving after. Why not say so, and be rid of all obscurantism at once?

The answer is simple. The education of the race, in its most successful form, has hitherto run in the Church channel. Great as its limitations and defects may have been, its uses and conse-

quences have been larger and better. Wise and good men, who love their race and are devoted to its elevation, however enlightened by philosophy and science, continue to value at the highest rate the educating power of the Bible, the mysterious personality of Jesus, the heritage of Christian institutions, the Church organization, the power of the Lord's day, and the symbols of baptism and the Lord's supper, for their immense services in the ordering of the religious life of the world. They are satisfied that it is easier to illuminate and broaden faith and piety than it is to sanctify culture and make a purely secular education embrace the elements necessary to sweeten and elevate and spiritualize man and society. They are not going to abandon Christianity and the Church so long as they find them hospitable in any degree to modern science, philosophy, and culture. They know that their very inhospitality in the past has come of certain wise and holy instincts, that feared that the precious deposit of faith and reverence in the Church might suffer damage or desolation by too great and easy commerce with the world of common thought. They feel that every slow and gracious lodgment which liberty and reason, science and philosophy, make in the Church, is a better augury for culture, and gives it a sweeter influence, than if made on ground not sacred and moist with the tears and prayers of saints. They believe that the Church can yet take in the world, and that theology will yet be hailed again, without

superstition or arrogance, as the Queen of the Sciences, if culture and science and philosophy bring their gifts, as did the ancient Magi, to the manger of the Christ-child. For Christian faith and Church religion, with all their errors and limitations, have ever had a certain largeness, a breadth of horizon, a height and depth, that culture in its noblest forms, and especially in its secular ones, has lacked. The Christian faith, at its worst, has maintained and stood for God's interest in man and God's help, and its supernaturalism and even its testimony for the miraculous have signified a certain fluid, translucent, or open way 'twixt God and man.

Until that faith rests upon clearer intellectual grounds, and is more recognized by science and culture, it is probable that the better instincts of humanity, having once tasted the charm and glory of the supernatural, will cling to the miraculous as its most obvious form. The bird stays in its nest until its wings are grown. Ideas still callow must keep their cradles too; and whatever may come ages hence, there is no evidence yet that the world has outgrown its need of Church protection or of Christian guidance. I do not believe it ever will; for the highest forms of character reared outside the Church and in alienation from it, or in contempt or denial of it, have thus far exhibited a one-sidedness, or crabbedness, or sourness, or hardness and aridity, which all their genius has not been able to make their culture overcome. The meekness,

the charity, the toleration, the self-control, the humility, of Christian saints, is more than a compensation for the loss of all that the widest secular culture or the most scientific education can bestow in their place.

And, indeed, we may distinctly affirm that faith and piety in Church order have shown themselves far more open to science, philosophy, and liberty, than science and philosophy have shown themselves open to faith and piety. The religious minds have been the widest minds in our time; and I might even say, that in America our Christian ministers at the upper end of the gamut (which, it must be confessed, has a lower range) are, on the whole, more cultured, broader, and larger than the representatives of any other profession or calling.

This, then, is the main hope of the world, *faith taking on culture*, and not *culture taking on faith*. We got the right start when the world, in the Hebrew race, started distinctly from God, and made religion the chief concern. As yet no progress has been made by the other order. True, the locomotive can push the train, but it is found far easier to pull it. This is the fundamental reason why those who occupy the vantage ground of an historical and hereditary faith, prune and water it as they may, should never abandon or disown its root or surrender its ground. All things will come to the Church if it maintains its faith and worship. Liberty will bring its fullest freedom, science its most noble conquests, and philosophy its most

precious discoveries. But where shall we find reverence, if we once lose the heritage of it? where public prayer, if not in holy custom, which has handed it down with hallowed experience to justify it? Who could reinvent the symbols and sacraments, whose loss we shall in vain deplore, after the cold hands of mere utilitarians have let them slip into the abyss of disuse?

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Ah! what new, what Christless or Churchless theory of culture, can ever make the appeal to the human heart and conscience which the accumulated significance of the call in these words arouses in our hearts? And how they swell as if with mighty waves from another shore, when we add, "for it is God which worketh in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure"! What but Christian faith is courageous enough, or comes out of an experience deep enough, to venture to teach the whole spiritual truth in a paradox as deep and glorious as this? And yet, if modern thought be only kept religious and Christian, it will soon justify this and other equally mighty sayings of the Apostles; for science is now upon the very skirts of theism, and cannot get much farther without breaking into worship and prayer. The Holy Spirit, which was long lost to the pioneers of religious liberty, has returned to bless their journey for light. I live and labor in the faith and hope that Jesus Christ will yet stand in the halls of science, art, and poetry, justified and called as the noblest leader of the race,

while not one ray of light will be unwelcome as his claims are searched, nor one feather plucked from Liberty's wing to stay her flight away from the altars of Christian faith.

Henceforth God and man must work together; faith and liberty be reconciled; the Church and the world do justice to each other; and culture and worship unite for one glorious consummation, — the Salvation of God!

II.

GOD IS LIGHT.

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

1 JOHN i. 5.

ON the last night of the old year, a distinguished master of science concluded, before many of my present hearers and a great concourse of other intelligent citizens, a series of six lectures on Light. I am sure none fortunate enough to share in the instruction of that clearest and most lucid of scientific teachers came away without a new and more reverent sense of the wondrous nature of the universe we dwell in, and a more glorious conception of the splendor and glory of Him who made the world and the people and creatures that occupy it.

It seems not strained to open the worship of the new year with a reference like this; for the revolutions of the earth about the sun, the ending and beginning of the years, acquire a new significance when we learn the dependence of our planet upon the central orb, from which it draws not only light and heat, but all that enables it to support vegetable and animal life, or fits it to be the temporary home of rational and moral beings.

And perhaps there is no theme that more properly belongs to the new date, or more seriously engages the thoughts of earnest and cultivated men of all pursuits, than the bearings of the new physical science upon our spiritual hopes and Christian faith. Let us then soberly address ourselves to this theme, on the very threshold of the opening year, which will be truly blessed only in so far as we can maintain through it a living faith in God, a practical conformity to his will, and a clear conviction of Christian duty and accountableness. I claim your most thoughtful attention, and shall not hesitate to draw a little upon your patience.

We are sometimes appalled at the vastness and complication and indirectness of the material apparatus by which, according to modern science, man is called into being and sustained in existence. The old ignorance seems to many more pious and comforting than the new knowledge. We should like to continue to feel as our fathers did, that God made and ruled the world by his mere fiat; that he literally said, "Let there be light, and there was light"; or, let the finished earth emerge from the waters; let the sun and stars newly created for our special use hurry to their places; let the seasons, like the new hands of a new clock, begin their rounds; let man of a sudden be fashioned out of the dust, and receive a living soul; and let none of these sublime and vast commandments have any other conditions than those of the instant and immediate will of God, whose word makes its own conditions, annuls

all obstacles, brooks no delay, and needs no preparation.

But modern science comes in, and will allow us no longer to rest in any of this impressive ignorance or simplicity of faith. We are, if we follow its leadings, compelled to see an immense and complicated constitution in the order of the universe; to find our earth part and parcel of a boundless and yet only partly explored system of worlds; to note its intricate and complex relation with phenomena billions of years remote in their origin or action. We find ourselves related to matter, to metals, to gases, to dynamic and mechanical powers, more ancient than the sun, — sharers in an impulse which has traversed and left its effects upon all the lower races of animals and all the meaner kingdoms of organized life, not to say all the brute force and substance in the universe.

This seems at first to snatch us out of the arms of our Maker, and leave us forlornly exiled in some remote province of his creation, where his immediate providence does not act, or his personal eye reach. Our earth sinks into a grain of sand, lost in a mountain peak of worlds composed of atoms vastly larger than its own. Our race is multiplied indefinitely, and reaches back hundreds of thousands of years, seeming to lessen to a humiliating insignificance the individual being who shares its transitory but ever returning tides of existence. What Providence can count the hairs on endless billions of human heads, or mark the spar-

rows that have fallen for thousands of centuries? We seem orphaned by the distance and grandeur of a Creator who retires into fathomless space, and has been at work upon his universe for so many unknown ages. What prospects have our individual souls of enjoying his immediate protection? How reasonable is our hope of escaping the extinction of an existence which has had such myriads of representatives, who never enjoyed a ray of the revelation we call our own, and laid themselves down to die without any clear expectation of immortality? Are not our Bibles turned into sacred fables, our Gospel made a myth, our prayers a superstition, our yearnings for a future life the unreasonable longings of restless and deluded imaginations that beguile themselves with sleepers' dreams?

Without assuming that the conclusions of modern science are correct, and without charging that they are hasty and in many respects as yet unproved, — without stopping to say that religious truth and faith have resources and evidences of their own that do not wait on physical science, and that the instincts, intuitions, and experiences of Christian society have a cumulative weight and stability that makes their essential ideas very little likely to suffer any final overthrow from physical investigations or new discoveries, — it may yet be frankly confessed that the new science of the physicists has greatly disturbed the religious and Christian faith of many, and is regarded by most professional

teachers of religion with a terror and dislike which, however natural, will not bear examination, and which it is due to the dignity of spiritual truth to moderate or disclaim.

Doubtless, the first effect of a great flood of light is always to darken vision and pain the eyes that receive it; and there can be no doubt that the change which science has introduced into our necessary conception of God's methods and ways has for the time weakened filial confidence, diminished religious certainty, and disturbed practical faith and piety, in our generation.

Probably, the old implicit faith — a faith derived from confidence in the verbal and literal inspiration of the Scriptures, in the truth of a certain circumscribed and wholly comprehensible system of theology, which rested on texts of Scriptures dependent on the assumption of the possession in the Bible of a perfect and infallible standard of all truth, scientific, historical, moral, and spiritual — is declining, if not gone forever. Meanwhile, and before our religious faith and hopes are adjusted to the new conditions, there is a sorrowful dubiousness, and a turbid element, in our hopes and fears, our spiritual confidences and speculations. But is it not instructive and consoling to know that this disarrangement of our ideas, this immense expansion of our experience, this agitation of our nature, is not due to anything *new* in the order of nature, to any change in the plans or laws of the Maker and Upholder of the universe? No wilful

enemy has come in to sow tares in our field; no demon has driven the benignant power our fathers trusted off his throne. We are only finding out, in the exercise of power originally latent, or by a slowly accumulating discernment and experience, things old and permanent, things real and true. Can there be anything likely to prove less valuable, less interesting, less truly comforting, in a deeper and more extended conception of the universe, a better understanding of God's real methods, than in the imperfect, erroneous, partial inferences we had drawn from an inferior knowledge and a hastier observation? Unless God is a less sublime and glorious, a less good and less holy being, than we have believed, surely a profounder, wider, and more genuine study of his laws and methods can only disclose what will exalt our confidence, increase our wonder, and enlarge our affections. There can be nothing but harm, deception, blind and imperfect service, growing out of ignorance. If we have hitherto built up on small and narrow observations, rash inferences, selfish hopes and fears, a conception of what we call Religion, — a snug, convenient, portable sort of faith, that humors our weakness, confirms our sloth, or magnifies our self-importance, — however dear and sacred it may have grown in our eyes and hearts, it is not one which true and perfect wisdom and goodness would be under any obligation to maintain, much less to keep such a sacred darkness about it that its untrustworthiness should not appear.

You remember very well, for you have all shared it, the child's idea of life, — his notion that grown people must all be good, that it must be beautiful to be a man and have one's own way, to go where and do what one pleases, and climb with growing strength continually into new pleasures and larger privileges. But is life as God slowly opens it before childhood, different as it is from this, a less wonderful and beautiful thing than the child's fancy? Is the disillusion which comes of experience a fall into an abyss, or is it an exaltation to something higher, nobler, and more worthy a moral being, more disciplinary to reason, more dignifying to the will, more suggestive of a spiritual destiny? So it will prove with our faith in God and his providence, when we come really to understand better and better how he rules the world. We can learn nothing about a perfect being that must not increase our sense of his perfection. The truth about God and God's ways, it is blasphemy to doubt, will be more exciting to true reverence, will present him in a more affecting and friendly character, than any of our fancies or imperfect theories have done. Is it piety, is it faith, is it reverence, which proclaims in advance, "I will not allow any of my present traditional notions of God's methods, his providence, his way of ruling and sustaining the world, to be changed. I will assume that nothing different can be better than what I now think. I will take a stand against all new light, all science, philosophy, experience, reason, that

threaten my old notions. What was good enough for my fathers and their fathers is good enough for me. I will denounce as pantheism, atheism, infidelity, irreligion, blasphemy, whatever science or reason attempts to prove, if it in any way disturbs my catechism, or the articles of my creed"? Is this real faith in God? Is this reverence for the truth of things, and the Being who is responsible for them? Is this piety, that cannot believe God good, wise, paternal, if it is discovered that some of our notions of his ways and means are not verified by new and more competent witnesses? Why not stop and inquire if what is true according to science is not better, worthier of God, perhaps more declarative of his wisdom and goodness, than anything we had previously believed? Why assume that it denies God, or makes his existence more doubtful, or is less favorable to our hopes or wants? If it is true, it cannot be anything but good, — unless, indeed, the universe is a fraud, a lie, an accident, — an idea so preposterous that it answers itself in all minds not crazed with conceited speculations and fond of eccentric self-contradictions.

Suppose we discovered, as some of us have discovered, that many of the ecclesiastical and dogmatic ideas which past and devout generations held are not tenable; that Jesus Christ is not God himself; that he did not buy us off from a primal curse (which really never existed) by his physical blood; that mankind do not live in this world merely as

prisoners waiting trial, the only real interest being to hear the final cry of "Guilty" or "Not guilty," and then go to an eternal heaven or an eternal hell, for which they had respectively been elected from all eternity. All who have read the history of opinions know that the first brave and spiritual men who questioned, and then disproved, this accepted system, claiming to be the very Gospel of Christ, were drawn and quartered, crucified and tortured, as enemies of the race, blasphemers of God and haters of his Son. It was verily thought that the new ideas, the growth of the science and philosophy and reason of that comparatively early day, would destroy all the motives to virtue and piety, and let loose the guilty passions of men, until gospel and order and heaven would disappear.

Well, has experience verified any of these fears? Have milder, more rational, broader views of Christianity, its essence, significance, and true value, diminished the moral life or spiritual hopes of man? Surely not. They would have done so, if they had not been true. But truth, or a finer approximation to truth, can never do permanent harm, or anything but permanent good. Christianity as it is, purified from the accretions and corruptions of ages, is vastly more beautiful, sweeter, holier, more mighty, than any mistaken ideas of it could be. As we weed out of it the errors men have sown in its soil, as we disentangle what is local, traditional, superstitious, from what is universal, real, original, we

come ever to finer and deeper sources of power. It becomes more divine, more sacred, more effective, as we know it more as it is. The world is always mistakenly ascribing the power Christianity exerts to things that have only clustered round it, — to the Trinity, the Atonement, the Incarnation, the doctrine of irresistible or prevenient grace, eternal punishment, or election; — the truth being that Christianity in its inherent truth and beauty exerts its holy influence in spite of these errors or imperfect assumptions. They have no more to do with its power than the barnacles on a ship have to do with promoting the vessel's progress, or than the fly on the wheel has to do with its revolutions. Take them away, and Christianity stands out only more beautiful in its naked simplicity, as a marble statue, when the artificial draperies are removed which a false taste has thrown around it, appears for the first time in its exquisite lines and proportions lovelier than any had suspected.

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If this be true, we have nothing to fear from any real discoveries which science, philosophy, Biblical criticism, speculation, investigation, can possibly make. When we are probing the physical universe which He made, we are not examining a work of doubtful character, ill made, its imperfections covered up, its best side put forward, its finest things worn as ornaments about its neck, while its hidden or secret parts may be foul and poor. We are looking at what proves more divine, and discloses

new and higher perfections, as we penetrate farther into its interior. Do you suppose the anatomist finds the most wonderful things in the human body on the skin? Is not every inward organ more amazing than any outward one? Is not the heart itself the most marvellous and astounding thing in the corporal frame? Did the discovery of the circulation of the blood make the human body a less excellent piece of workmanship? Have physiologists grown less humble, or less awed, as they have come to understand better the tissues, nerves, forces, which are woven into the robe our spirits wear? Has Nature lost her dignity and glory by the expansion which the telescope has given to space, and the multiplication of worlds? Has the microscope detected any hidings of weakness, poor workmanship, or defective skill, in the utmost reaches of its analytic search? No. On the contrary, it is the vastness, splendor, glory, belonging to the outward world, which have most alarmed the timid human soul. It sees itself at first no match for such a magnificent and sublime physical system! God himself seems dethroned by the extent and sublimity of his own kingdom.

How can one mind or will grasp, govern, set in order, or maintain such an immensurable system? We weakly crave a smaller universe, a simpler and more intelligible order of nature, that it may not outstrip or exceed what it is possible for us to think of as superintended by one Intelligence called God. Once, on the contrary, believers in God sought to

emphasize, and unfold, and make glorious the known creation, to render it more worthy of the care and indicative of the majesty and might of its great occupant and builder, God. Now, Nature has grown so much larger and more glorious than man's old conceptions of God, that they are afraid to contemplate it, or admit its vastness and wondrous constitution, lest it should make it impossible for them to believe that any being great enough to frame and control it can exist. But how truly childish and illogical is this fear! Have the greatness and glory of the physical universe really done anything to make mind, will, conscience, less essential, less paramount, or less divine? What power has interpreted Nature, discovered her recondite laws, pushed out the walls of space, unbraided the solar ray, read the stony tablets of the earth's history, untangled the orbits of the planets, weighed the stars, analyzed the constitution of the sun? Is it not mind? Is it not the human mind?

If you ponder the case of Kepler discovering by a sublime analysis the laws which Newton afterwards matured into the law of gravitation, or Kirschoff by an equally splendid series of theoretical experiments detecting the existence of the very metals that are the base of our own planet in the atmosphere of the distant sun, you have an evidence of what a finite, limited, feeble image of God, a human mind, can do to illustrate the sublime grandeur of spirit. And I say with all reverence that it is a mighty help to a theistic faith to go from the

contemplation of such gigantic feats of single human intelligence as these triumphs of mind present to the conception of the Master-mind of the universe, the Spirit of spirits, the primal and infinite Fountain-head of all intelligence, will, and comprehension. Are the sublime and overwhelming manifestations of skill, power, extent, order, evolution in the universe, fatal signs of an absent source, cause, or providence? Nay, they are only proofs that the Being who is the heart and soul of creation is more majestic, glorious, loving, and unfathomable in wisdom and power than human thought and experience had hitherto been able to conceive.

They do not make God's being or personality less necessary or less probable, but more so. They make our conception of God larger, higher, less exhaustible, less wholly comprehensible, but not less real, and not less adorable and trustworthy. They bring him nearer as well as put him farther off. They reveal him more closely present in his works, which thrill with his power and life in the innermost fibres of nature, even if they compel us to think of him as inhabiting countless worlds and having ends and objects beyond our utmost conjecture. What we know of him remains unaffected by what we do not and cannot know of him; for moral and emotional and axiomatic things are known by sample or quality, not by quantity; and it is their nature to be unchanged by distance, combination, or any unknown elements. It is so with all self-evident

things, — with Reason, Love, Right, — with the axioms of numbers.

But can a God so mighty, so laden with cares, so orderly, so all-pervading and all-including, be a Person, a Father, a Friend, a Being to know, and love, and trust? Have we in modern science found the Creator to be negligent of details in his universe, because engrossed with vast generalities? Does not the microscope supplement the telescope, and teach us that God is just as traceable in the infinitely little as in the infinitely great? Is there anything small or great, more or less important or significant, to the Maker of all? Is his providence less direct over a circle in the water made by a pebble, than over the sweep of a comet or the orbit of the sun? over the fall of an apple, than over the descent of a thunderbolt? Ah! but his laws are so orderly, his ways so impersonal, his silence so complete, his universe so machine-like! And is it really so? Is there any machine capable of endless evolutions? Do machines and laws make life? Have scientists and philosophers got any nearer, with all their profound investigations, to the hidden secret of life in a single thing? Is there any prospect of their ever penetrating to the depth where that junction of spirit with matter is formed which produces even a dog's instinct, not to speak of a man's reason?

I am not now assuming that we know what matter is, any more than we know what mind is. But if matter should prove to be mind seen on the

wrong or outer side, — if it should turn out that matter and mind are parts of each other, — recollect that it would not make mind any more a part of matter than it would make matter a part of mind. We have talked about *brute* matter as if it were certain that that unknown thing — that union of forces known at last only in its effects upon our minds — which we call matter were certainly something in itself dead, mere stuff to be moulded by forces that do not partake its own nature.

But it is not at all certain that matter is any less an intellectual and spiritual inference, produced by mental impressions, than is thought itself. It does not alarm me to hear physicists talk of matter's thinking or developing thought, for the moment that is proved — which is certainly a remote probability — I shall know that God is in his material as he is in his spiritual universe; that he possesses and moves it as he does our souls. Talk to me of spontaneous generation, as if the possibility of developing even animal life from pure inorganic matter by electricity, or other processes not yet known, banished God and made man a creator! Man is only an observer. It is the intellectual, organific power hid by God, or exercised by God in matter, that creates. Do we create the children born of our loins, or does God create them? And yet he uses us as the conditions of creating them. Is it any less wondrous or pious, than if he took separate lumps of clay and made each human form

with visible hands, and then directly endowed it before our eyes with a living soul?

Do not believe that the truth can ever do any harm, much less can ever banish God, or lessen the human soul and its hopes, or make the religion of Jesus Christ less a verity, however it may modify the world's ideas of it. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." I do not find men of science, philosophy, investigation, less scrupulous in morals, less reverent in feeling, less elevated in character, less hopeful of human destiny, less disposed to anticipate immortality, than those Christians who throw all that weight upon the Bible testimony. I have not an iota of fear that Jesus Christ is destined to lose a ray of his true glory by the flooding of the world, in the past ages or the present, with scientific and intellectual light. There are sources of truth, evidences of divinity, testimonies to spiritual realities, which physical science can neither increase nor destroy. We do not ask modern students in Greek syntax whether Homer was a great poet. The ancients knew it, just as we know it, by feeling. Learning, new views, new experience, do not threaten the verdict past ages have rendered on his genius.

Students in the latest philosophy and logic cannot discrown Aristotle, nor modern moralists rob Socrates, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, of their chaplets. Moses seems a greater lawgiver and prophet the more we study the history of dynasties and the policy of statesmen. There are certain things which were known, and done, and proved, long before

science or philosophy existed, — known by feeling, experience, by mere living, by intuition. And great sages and prophets and seers sang and taught, without any physical science whatsoever, truths, sentiments, and principles which no succeeding gifts, or teachers, or science, or philosophy, have changed, or threaten to change.

Jesus Christ needs no falsehoods, no superstitions, no necessary darkness of his times, nor artificial and wilful darkness of ours, to maintain the glory and beauty which belong to his name, character, and office. He is no mere magician, man of his time, reflex of local superstitions, growth of mythic fungi, or accumulation of moral coral insects, building slowly up his continental magnitude of size and sway! What he said, did, and was, would seem as surpassingly true, beautiful, divine, commanding, if uttered to-day, as it did eighteen centuries ago. It is the central nearness of his life and thought to God's own thought and life that keeps him on his moral and spiritual throne. I do not tremble for the permanency of his beatitudes, precepts, and promises any more than for the truth of the multiplication table. Science and philosophy, in wearing away the prejudices and superstitions that surround his name, are only like the winds and waves raving about the base of a broad sea-girt island and eating into its table-land, that at last the majestic, unchangeable peak of some rocky Teneriffe may be disclosed as its heart. Jesus Christ is more and more the moral miracle of humanity, the one tower-

ing pillar that refuses to lower its head or recede from view, — travel past it, or leave it ages behind, as the race may. Mecca, Jerusalem, have annually their thousands of pilgrims, all due to the attraction of Jesus, for Mahomet shone mainly in his light. But of the pilgrimages to the light of the world, the visits to Jesus's feet, — every path of science, philosophy, experience, morals, faith, seems more and more converging on that central point. The denials, the doubts, the questions, of our day, are more devout than the unreasoned affirmations, the feeble acquiescences, the formal gregarious faith, of ages past.

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." See to it that you are children of the light. If your deeds are dark, you will shrink from the light of life. Open the shutters of your minds; clear out the cobwebs from your consciences; sweep the litter from the closets where secret sins and wrong habits lurk, and fester, and rot. Be true, and put no faith in lies, appearances, and make-beliefs. God is light, and wills that you live in the light. He has given every man a light in his reason and conscience, which matches with or answers to the Sun of Righteousness. While you walk in the light of your own souls, following the candle of the Lord, you will find the light of Christ's life mingling with, brightening, and always harmonizing with your private light; for all light has a common source. Remember light was not made for the eye more than the eye for light. Light is indeed

first known as light, perhaps first exists as light, when it reaches the eye! Do not fear that light will ever, can ever, betray you.

It is only darkness, — the darkness of selfishness, passion, sin, falsehood, sloth, that can injure and destroy. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Do not fear any betrayal, any going back on his promises, any giving out of his power and goodness, any failure in his ever more glorious unfolding of himself; and do not doubt that everything you can wisely wish, hope, or believe, in the exercise of your largest liberty, your sweetest affections and grandest and purest longings, — everything heart and soul can honorably desire, — will be more fully met and satisfied in the future by the glorious munificence of the Creator and Providence of our being than we can now dream of. For "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

III.

SPIRITUAL SPRING-TIDE:

OR, A DIRECT, IN CONTRAST WITH AN INDIRECT, ATTITUDE TOWARDS OBJECTS OF FAITH.

Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun.

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 13, 14.

WE are just on the line of one of those great transitions in external nature which transform the aspect of the world and change the occupations and habits of millions of human beings. Until quite recently the fields for hundreds of miles north and west have been covered with snow, slowly melting from beneath into the unfrozen soil; the ice-bound rivers and brooks have only within a few weeks shaken off their fetters; the trees, so short a time since stark and leafless, are full of swelling buds, or tinged with green; the chilling air has a breath of mildness at noonday; and the sky deepens its steely blue, and holds now and then at evening a fleecy cloud, that looks as if it had strayed from a southern heaven.

"As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed,
And Winter oft at eve resumes the breeze,
Chills the pale morn, and bids his driving sleets
Deform the day delightless."

THOMSON.

A week, however, may not pass, a fortnight will not, before a marked and momentous change will make itself universally felt and seen. The grass will be successfully struggling in the parks and fields, and gladdening the eye with its hope-inspiring greenness; birds will be chirping gleefully as they gather straws and moss for their nests; the tree-tops will be thickening into that dotted veil out of which in a few weeks is to be fashioned the fresh and beauteous garment that shall clothe their gaunt skeletons in flowing vernal robes. Instead of death we shall have life; instead of brownness and stillness, verdure and motion; in place of suspended animation, activity and progress; in place of cold, warmth; of winter, spring; of confinement, liberation; of gloom and patient waiting, cheerfulness and co-operative labor, inspired by hope and confidence.

"O, how delightful to the soul of man,
How like a renovating spirit comes,
Fanning her cheek, the breath of infant spring."

And what is the cause of this ever-surprising and refreshing change in the aspect of nature, the activity of vegetation, the climate and the occupations and habits of the people? Only the influence of the directer rays of the sun, — no nearer than

before, but with the aspect of our portion of the earth turned more evenly towards him. His heat-bearing rays, falling more squarely upon our part of the globe's surface, act with magical power upon the latent capabilities of the soil. They search out every inert and paralytic atom, liquefy every frost-bound fluid, find and kindle every chilled germ. The very soil that holds within itself all the while the same possibilities of life, motion, beauty, has, in the turning away of the sun's directer rays, faded and fainted, nay, slept as in seeming death! But it now bursts from its swoon, revives in strength, and puts on the fresh beauty of its perennial youth, only because beams that then shone upon it, then lighted it and even smiled a wintry smile upon its face, are now directly and continuously turned upon it.

Notice, now, that it is only a difference of degree that makes the contrast between winter barrenness and spring verdure. The sun shines in winter; the seeds, and sap, and life of the earth are latent in it at all seasons. The sole difference is, that the degree of heat, the intensity or directer force of the sunbeams, the slightly changed attitude of the earth to the sun, make all this wondrous change between death and life, barrenness and verdure, ashes and beauty.

Notice again, that while the increased heat, or directer beams of the sun, is the cause of the spring, it is a cause that requires the previous existence of the roots, and germs, and juices, and terrestrial chem-

istry, out of which, and by co-operation with which, the sun produces the vernal transformation which seems, but is not, a re-creation. There is an equal partnership, so far as the beauty and fruitfulness of the spring and summer, the fair children of nature, are concerned, between the sun and the earth. He rejoiceth as a bridegroom to run his course; she as a bride to receive her husband. It is only another illustration of the old Scriptural legend, "the sons of God loved the daughters of men." Sun and earth are husband and wife, each an equal partner in the marriage and progeny of both.

Consider also that it is not an unnatural relation that subsists between this little globe and its remote and distant bridegroom, but one inconceivably ancient and belonging to the constitution of things. Ten thousand, thousand times, perhaps, this tender embrace has occurred. The sun has kissed the earth, not upon the forehead or cheek, but on the very lips; and at once she has known and rejoiced in her husband, and borne him, year after year, the beauteous babe of the spring, until a train of countless children of promise and beauty, each with the coronet of anemones, and cowslips, and lilies of the valley wreathed on its brow, floats in the sky of memory and fades in the mists of unremembered time.

Note again, that this life-producing power is ninety millions of miles remote, inaccessible, little known except in its effects; that it changes not, but that the earth changes; that it is central, — in

reference to us fixed; and that its power is always equally going forth; and that, so far as we know, though the sun sustains by its attraction, and holds in its place, the whole solar system, it is only our earth which it clothes with verdure and makes the abode of life, growth, and happiness. Speculate as science may, it cannot prove that a particle of either vegetable or animal life exists in any other of the planets, nor even render it probable, upon any conditions known to be essential to life on our little earth. Here, then, we have the almost inconceivable wonder, had we not the actual realization of it, of one of the least important of the planets placed providentially in such a conjunction of circumstances — near enough and not too near, with just such an inclination of its axis to the sun's path — as to make possible here, and here alone, just that result which constitutes for us the fact of vegetable, animal, and human life; the existence of a climate adapted to all the forms of life we know, with the beauteous circuit of the seasons, — the miracle of an ever-dying and ever-reviving, an immortal year. I might continue to draw your attention to many other most interesting relations between the earth and the sun, to their intimate partnership in certain altogether peculiar and wondrous results. But I should then lose the time for making an application of the lesson they give to our faith and duty.

How instructive, and how evidently instructive by design, are these analogies of the relations of the

earth to the sun, so suggestive of the relations of the soul to God and of the disciple to Christ! I will not waste your time and attention on what is merely ingenious or fanciful, nor attempt to follow out these analogies in artful parallels. Their whole force dwells in their natural suggestiveness, — in what needs little pointing and no rhetoric.

As over the earth, so over us, we know that there is a power without which we could not exist. It is God. Like the sun, we feel Him to be central, and the source of intellectual light and moral heat. Like the sun, we feel Him to be inaccessible, remote, and of inconceivable glory; nay, the glowing centre of forces too mighty and awful for us to penetrate. He, too, rises upon the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the just and the unjust. In Him we live and move and have our being; as the earth lives, moves, and is, by virtue of the sun's power and influence. But how long has the world been in discovering the intimacy, the exquisite adjustment, the partnership, I may say, between the sun and the earth, and their relative places? For ages the sun seemed a satellite of the earth, like the moon, — a mere lamp or furnace to light and heat the palace of the world. Its distance, magnitude, relations to the other planets, were not known; the earth was not even known to be a sphere, but deemed a table of land, how supported none knew. The sun was indeed often worshipped as a god; but his most important relations to the earth, or his mysterious powers, were not suspected. Probably many of the

more recondite and yet important offices and effects and operations of the sun are not yet known, — as indeed, we may add, is equally true of the earth and its secrets. Has it not been precisely so with the world's conceptions of God, and of man in his relations to God?

Modern science has demonstrated beyond question that the relations of the earth and the sun are not only vital, inseparable, exquisitely productive of variety, order, life, and happiness, but that in the study of these relations are to be found the most instructive, exalting, and illuminating scientific and practical truths; — laws and suggestions touching light, heat, fertility, order in creation; analogies and relations of kingdoms; ideas which have slowly revolutionized science, and made art a new and intensely powerful servant of humanity. Now is it not equally true that the relations between God and man are gradually disclosing themselves as universal, original, and constitutional, — partaking of the nature of law, having nothing artificial, arbitrary, or accidental about them, but vastly more active, beneficent, and fruitful than man in earlier times had been able to conceive?

Now the whole progress, humanly speaking, of the earth in use, fertility, and health, has been really due to the accommodation of the action of its inhabitants to the powers, laws, influences, which govern the earth's relations to the sun. The nations have been compelled, if they would flourish, to migrate to portions of the earth, the temperate

zones, where they might retain physical vigor, and yet find Nature neither too teeming nor too barren to yield herself to their direction and control. They have been obliged to put their commerce upon the tides and trade-winds and follow the bidding of the sun; to leave the poles to the whales and the bears and the Esquimaux, and abandon the equator to a low civilization. They could not if they would plant in the autumn, nor reap in the spring; live out of doors in the winter, nor stay within in the summer. They have perished by thousands because they would not leave the spots where the sun smote them too keenly, and would stay within the degrees where only sickly beams struggle through chilling mists for a few hours of daylight. How vain this controversy! Human nature has steadily refused to ripen a full civilization outside of the temperate zone, to yield to the stupidity which has disregarded the laws of heat and light and the irreversible action of the sun on the earth. Meanwhile, the sun has seemed to be continually saying, "Study my laws and ways, develop my nature and understand my influences, and there is no end to the riches, blessings, furtherances, which the earth and its denizen shall acquire by accommodation to and co-operation with my powers."

Is not this exactly what God is always saying and always doing? "Get larger, truer, nobler conceptions of me; understand your creator, inspirer, original and immortal benefactor, as he really is; perceive the closeness, the naturalness, the reality, and the

beauty of your relations to him; follow him to the places where he will meet you; adjust yourself to the conditions of his co-operation; accept the direct light and heat he offers you; and you will find him to be indeed the motive power, the renewer, the spring-tide, the life-giver of your souls."

But we are always forgetting that, while our nature is the seed-ground, and our talents, capacities, and faculties are the seeds, of our immortality and of that harvest which is to follow the culture of life, yet God is the sun from which those seeds must continually receive life. So far as we know, God has never put any new faculties into a single one of the children of this earth, but only sunned those faculties which have turned most directly towards Him into life and beauty, until in certain cases they have grown into such splendor that they have been mistaken as new in kind as well as superlative in degree. But reason and conscience, will and affection, are constants, like the various classes, genera, and species of the vegetable kingdom. We discover what we call new varieties and new species; but they are old species and varieties now first observed, except in artificial products. So we see extraordinary moral, intellectual, and spiritual powers in some rare men, and we justly think them inspired; but inspiration, which is the quickening and ripening of germs of knowledge and feeling, faculty and apprehension, latent in human souls, is only active and efficient when the directer rays of God's truth and grace have shone favorably upon them.

Now, brethren, the whole business of a human soul is to seek and enjoy the directest beams of its Sun, the Almighty God. It knows nothing of what it contains, or of what it can do or become, while it is away from the divine heat and light. Men go to more favorable climates to raise larger crops, to shake off threatening diseases, to rear delicate children. How few men think it worth while to emigrate into God's sunshine; to leave cold and barren communities, where they grow awry or grow downward, like roots; to guard their souls by suitable barriers from blighting winds of worldliness and chilling frosts of unbelief; to concentrate on themselves, by the proper use of well-known instruments, the scattered rays of divine light and life!

What would be thought of a man in these days who should be so exceptionally wise and interested in the growth of his own soul in knowledge and life, that he should say to himself, "I cannot live in a vile community, or pursue an equivocal business, or share a doubtful companionship, and enjoy any moral and spiritual growth. I had better be poor, or a drudge, or unknown, or an exile from cities, than lose my vision of right, my knowledge of God, my sympathy with innocency, my faith in Christ, my hope of immortality. I will go where I can own more of my time; possess more of my own soul; see more of God and less of things; have divine sunshine and spiritual fruit, and not scorch in the blaze of fashion, shrivel in the heat of competitive trade, or dry up in the desert of arid

cares." Would he be any less wise spiritually, or less justified by a high expediency, than a good father, who leaves a malarious district to save his children's lives, or emigrates from the sea-coast to Minnesota to prevent the development of hereditary tubercles in the lungs of his wife or daughter? True, we cannot always emigrate from bad moral latitudes, or cold, unspiritual climates. But we can strengthen the conditions of moral and religious safety by a closer observance of the laws of spiritual growth and moral health. There is no place where God does not send his light, where man is. We cannot run away or hide from God. We live, move, and have our being in him. But we can avoid all direct interviews, we can escape all positive influence from him, if we live in the latitudes where he shines feebly and sheds only indirect rays.

For instance: God is in our reason, our affections, in all our faculties and powers, and sustains, as he originally created, them all; but he is *directly* in our *conscience!* It is only in the conscience that we feel his meridian beams. But is not that the very reason why so many will not make their headquarters in the conscience? That is a part of their being or nature they keep somewhat shut up, like a Sunday room, or dark closet where the family plate or jewels are kept. Everybody knows that, if he wants to feel God's influence *directly*, he must come and sit down in this secret chamber of the soul. Its windows have a direct exposure to God's influence. Nobody can habitually or often live in

that part of his being, without finding himself growing in grace, in holiness, in faith and moral power. But is not God everywhere? Yes; but his *direct* are as superior in influence to his indirect beams as June is more genial than November, as Spring is more alive than Winter.

Again, God is in the poetry and literature and wisdom of all nations, in all art and music and gracious feeling, but He is there *indirectly*. No literature — call it sacred if you will — is so saturated with the direct light of his countenance as the Bible. I defy anybody to be a diligent and intelligent student and reader of the Bible, without becoming increasingly sensitive to God's influence, more and more conscious of dependence on him, more sure of his presence and power. Here is a book which, read in its own light, or by the light of a seeking, reverent heart, and in an humble and prayerful spirit, reveals such warmth, light, inspiration, that those who live by it and in it feel that their souls have found a gentler, diviner climate, a directer exposure, a sunnier clime, for their latent and budding capacities of spiritual growth and enjoyment. Yet who now seeks and studies this Book as the shrine to which saints, apostles, martyrs, bequeathed their hearts and left embalmed their lives, — as the place where survive the record and memory of their inward visions, exalted faith, their holiest hymns of praise and prayers of supplication, of their open sight of heavenly counsels vouchsafed to more tender and believing spirits, —

as the monument of what virtue has suffered in the cause of humanity and faith has done and borne for the glory of God, — the Book of books, and therefore the central fount of religious refreshment and healing, so far as inspiration or the Holy Spirit can be set to words or held in records?

But again, observation, meditation, receptivity, experience, are all forms of indirect light from heaven; but there is one direct way of seeking that divine light, — it is prayer! What is prayer but the soul's attempt to find the closest conjunction possible between itself and its Maker? It goes to the top of its dwelling, like Jacob, takes off the shoes of worldly care, opens the window that looks straightest towards God and heaven, sinks upon its knees in token that it waits to be lifted, — not by its own effort, but by the Spirit that made it, — and supplicates blessing, and light, and help. But this beautiful and benignant privilege, this opportunity offered by our very nature to converse directly with God, is now rashly thrown away. Men cannot see how it is going to alter matters to talk with God. It gives him no new information, it cannot change the changeless. It does not alter the laws of nature to keep your seeds in your bureau, instead of dropping them into the April furrow; but it greatly alters the prospect of your autumn harvest. It does not change a bulb's nature to lay it on the window sill on the north side of the house, or to place it where the southern sun shall strike it longest in the April day; but it will make

a wonderful difference in its flowering and color. People who do not and will not pray do not and will not grow. If they think God does not know his own business, or did not know what he was doing when he made our knees to bend, our eyes to turn to heaven, our hearts to cry out in darkness for his strength, I cannot help them; but neither will God.

Again, Jesus Christ is the directest ray God ever shot into the world. If you want to get as near to God as you can, go and find Jesus Christ. There is the summer solstice! I do not care to argue his nature or his claims. I stick by spiritual facts. And I say this: be Jesus Christ what he may, he is the being who has received and reflected the directest beams of God's love, wisdom, truth. He makes around him a climate of piety. To get near to him is to feel God's power, influence, and renewing grace, as it can be felt nowhere else, and by no other way. And that is the very reason people will not readily come to him, as well as the very reason why at last they do and must. Who goes to the oculist willingly? who but must go, if blindness suddenly threaten? Who in his worldly, fleshly, pleasure-seeking state wants Jesus Christ active in his heart? Will he go near him until he feels somehow that he must? So the earth seems in the early March reluctant to admit the sun to her bosom. How shy and coy and obstinate she is, baffling our hopes and longings for spring! But the sun is patient, and knows he must prevail.

How patient God is! He has a spring all ready for our souls. He is always blessing, sustaining, cheering, inspiring us; our ordinary lives are raised by him immeasurably above what they would naturally tend to if left to themselves. But the joy and peace and glory of religion, a sense of direct love and power and uplifting from him, that he will not force upon us. If you choose to live near the spiritual poles, or on the north side of Christ, or away from God, or only in his shade, you can. But you might as well put out your eyes, or cut off your hand or foot, or move into Greenland, — you know not what you lose. You think you are merely acting with good common sense, and opposing superstition and fancy; but you are really giving up man's chief privilege, losing his greatest power, diminishing or failing to secure the largest possible increase of your being and your fairest hope of entering the kingdom of heaven.

IV.

VIEWS FROM HIGH PLACES.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled
And every mountain and hill shall be made low;
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough ways shall be made smooth;
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

ISAIAH xl. 3–5.

ON our national day of Independence, in company with an English friend to whom I was anxious to show the beauty of our scenery, after having ascended the Hudson, I found myself on the summit of the Catskills, looking down upon the farms and forests, the villages and towns, commanded by that lofty view. There are few views in the world so open and extensive, considering that the height is only three thousand feet. But beautiful and vast as the prospect is, over that broad landscape of fertile fields and thick woods, of distant ranges of hills, and of the silver belt which the Hudson River becomes, with church spires, and growing towns, and isolated farmhouses, the view would soon tire were it not continually diversified with mists and clouds, now hidden, now

revealed, now flecked with storm-shadows, and now bright with cloudless sunshine. After all, it was the sky rather than the earth that lent its chief beauty and charm to the scene; and when a sudden thunder-storm passed directly in front and below us, and in a few moments after, where blackness and beating rain had been, stood a broad, magnificent rainbow, solid enough to sustain the sky, its feet both resting squarely on the valley, and its head above the clouds, — it communicated a thrill of joy, and filled the landscape with a spirit of hope and heavenly promise.

There is something besides the pleasure of the eye in the instinct that leads us to seek high places. A broad and commanding view helps to correct the prejudices and partialities of a vision that is usually shut in by obstructions and limited to what is near. Broad views, when used of moral or intellectual prospects, is a phrase which draws all its meaning from our experience when looking down and far around upon external things from some commanding height. How little do those who never leave their own farms, or villages, know of the relations their homes bear to the country about! How small a space the hundred or two acres, to them so important, fill in the landscape! It can be covered with a penny. How imperceptible the swell of the hills! The general surface, which, travelled over, is found to be a succession of brisk ups and downs, seems here a level plain. Farms ten miles apart, and whose relations are unknown

to their owners, are here seen to be on the same slope, watered by the same stream, and protected by the same range of hills. And how blended into one are the features of a whole fifty miles square of territory! The mountains of Berkshire and the range of the Catskills echo each other's storms, share each other's showers, and add to each other's beauty. The fields make the forests more lovely, and the forests the fields; the river and its highlands shrink into their relative proportions, and serve only as a bright girdle to the half-living creature, the landscape; and no one element prevails or tyrannizes over the rest.

On these high places we first begin to suspect the falseness of those impressions of life due to a narrow experience. Is there any difference among men so great as that which proceeds, on the one hand, from the habit of ceaseless preoccupation with local, personal, and petty concerns, and on the other, from a disciplined habit of observing and considering what is happening to nations, communities, — happening elsewhere and affecting others, rather than ourselves? Here in view is a little village, for instance, that estimates the prosperity of the whole season by the amount of rain that has fallen on its own fields. It neither knows, nor cares, that abundant rain has fallen on all the valley fifty miles below. Another calls the season very sickly, because some local epidemic has carried off a few noted neighbors. This family, addicted to feuds and cursed with an uneven and quarrelsome

temper, has a very low opinion of human nature, and pronounces the whole world envious and contentious. In this other, where amiable dispositions are hereditary and good nature prevails, there is a precisely opposite prejudice, — that all men and women are kind and gentle. In the country it is generally assumed that all the people in the city are proud, devoted to pleasure, and greedy for wealth. In the city, it is as commonly deemed that the people in the country are boorish, ignorant, and narrow-minded. The older folks wonder what pleasure the young can find in idle games, light tattle, and noisy romping; the young, what satisfaction or contentment the old, in silent meditations, grave books, and the solitude of their own thoughts. The Roman Catholic really thinks the Protestant has no religion, because he does not go to mass and confession; and the Protestant thinks the Catholic a mere deluded child, to credit what to him is such nonsense. The Shah of Persia, who is probably a Parsee or fire-worshipper, must be greatly amused, as he travels through the regions where Mahometanism, the Greek Church, the Roman Church, the Lutheran Church, the English Church, the Dissenting Church, prevail, at what to him are only more or less ridiculous forms of local superstition. How any people can be so foolish as not to see that fire is the most powerful, purifying, and sacred symbol in the universe, and the sun the most obvious and natural divinity, must be a question very puzzling to his diamond-plumed head as he carries

his almond eyes through the odd jumble of European religions.

Now, when we ascend a high mountain, and behold what was distant and separate to us below blended into nearness, reduced in size, and related in its parts, it is impossible not to assimilate our feelings and views in some degree to those of the Divine Spectator, who takes in not only all worlds and all space, but all time and eternity, at one view. We ask ourselves how God, who sees all men and all things in their relations, must regard passing events and opinions. And although it is quite impossible for our finite minds to answer the question, it is easy or unavoidable to see that it is quite impossible for Him to sympathize with our personal and local prejudices, especially so far as they presuppose partiality here and indifference there. For instance, as I look down on the plain below me, I see one village with its farms enveloped in mist and clouds, — a violent thunder-storm is just breaking over it. Twenty miles off, I see another village, with the brightest sunshine beating upon its roofs and fields. Doubtless, in the village under the storm, all the children are called in, the windows closed, and the whole attention fastened upon the lightning and the rain, which seems there to involve the whole world. In the other village the children are at play, the doors and windows are open to the soft breeze, and all the world seems smiling in sunlight. But to me, I am in neither village; I see both; and I see that storm and sun-

shine are both equal messengers of Divine wisdom and love, that they are both busy at the same moment, and that they are not in the least opposed to each other in purpose, and indeed are parts of a common system and plan.

In like manner, there come up to me on two different currents of air, from two different villages, here the ringing of joy-bells, and there the solemn notes of a funeral-toll. I know that gayety and pleasure and festivity are in one town, and mourning and sadness in another. I hear them both, and at the same moment. They blend together, and each chastens the other. I cannot wholly join the funeral, nor wholly the festival. Is it not so to the observing eye, elevated by reflection at all times? Does it not see how gladness and sadness are commingled, — how near neighbors they are, — how compatible with each other? I often see in this city the wedding flowers at the window of one house, and the crape on the bell-pull of the next; or the bride going home from church in one carriage, and the young mother borne in the hearse stopping the way; or perchance go from officiating at a marriage to officiate at a burial. Who that reflects but must say to himself, Our Heavenly Father, on his high mountain, perpetually and at the same moment takes in all this joy and all this misery, all this life and all this death, all that is special and local and personal, and all that is common, universal, and relative? To him it is part and parcel of one plan. And the shades and colors are

so mixed and blent, the lights and shadows so balanced, the good and evil so distributed, that it all gives satisfaction, and at any rate has his patience and long-suffering. It cannot be that pain and pleasure are one thing, good and evil indifferent, truth and error alike. For this contradicts our most radical and permanent instincts. But it must be that pain and error and evil have some necessary and medicinal part in the common tendency to truth, goodness, and happiness. I see from this mountain mists, vapors, clouds, hail, rain, storm. But I see that, come and go as they will and must, create gloom, and occasion disappointment and damage as they will, they are mere attendants on mightier elements, of a more beneficent and mild character. The sunshine is the rule; and, under God, the sun is the ruler. It is his bright and benignant face that calls up the vapors, and that loosens the breezes that rush into storms. And, after all, is not the sunshine dearer, more beneficent, and more enjoyable, for night, and cloud, and cold, and rain? I can see nothing in the wonderful constitution of the sun, and in the relation of the earth to it, which does not, the more I study it, reveal the glory and goodness and wisdom of God. I would not have fewer seasons, or less marked; more sunshine or less storm. And I cannot conceive that man would do anything but lose education, honor, dignity, and happiness, if outward nature were any less varied, or its forces more regular and harmonious; or his necessity of struggling

with sea and storm, with wilderness and mountain range, had been originally provided against.

What if Hendrick Hudson, when he entered the mouth of this harbor and sailed up beyond the Catskills, had found here a tropic clime, — level pampas or mild savannas, — a race like the Peruvian or Mexican, — no winter, perpetual summer, and a bounty that fed man and beast with spontaneous hand, without demanding or allowing labor or forethought? Should we now have a thousand sloops spreading their beautiful wings on the river, and carrying back and forth the products of a hundred towns upon its industrious banks? Would science have ever produced a Fulton in the city at its mouth, to send up against wind and tide the steamboat that in ten hours connects New York and Albany, then a week apart? or a Morse, to bind in almost instant communion, with his electric wire, the capital of the State with its business and social metropolis? Would schools for youth, colleges for men, — yes, and for women, too, — have adorned its high shores, and every form of labor and every result of art and science have in a couple of centuries made its mouth the seat of one of the three most important cities on the globe? Be sure that God knew what was in man when he made the globe and its climates, and its rugged hills, and its stormy seas, — when he made the equatorial regions, chiefly to provoke his commerce with their spices and gums, or to heat the airs necessary to mitigate the climates of the temperate zones, where he pre-

pared to educate the race, and bring it to its utmost civilization, in conflict with a tonic and resistful, and yet a finally complying and fruitful soil.

And when, looking down from this elevation, I consider what Hendrick Hudson saw as he ascended this river, — an unbroken wilderness, trodden by savage man and by wild beasts, — and how long the wealth and capacities since developed had then been sleeping in oblivion, — yet that two hundred years have made it a garden of civilization, and hung it with villas, and covered it with towns and cities, and placed a great people in the enjoyment of plenty and education and public repute upon its banks, — I cannot but ask myself what, not two hundred, but two thousand years may do to make our present standards of education, morality, religion, of home and of happiness, seem hardly less crude and savage than Hudson thought the country and the people when he first found them.

The main advantage in studying the past and the present, and in observing the contrast between them, is to draw lessons of hope for the future. Many are disposed to think the human race moves in cycles, which tend to return from the culmination they attain in one part of their journey to the depression in which they started. I believe no such thing. The earth itself is a story of ever-ripening beauty. It was never as green, as cultivated and redeemed, as it is now. Kingdoms rise and fall, but civilization never goes backward. It sometimes escapes from hands unworthy to hold it;

but it is to find a larger reception from other races and regions, that diffuse it over the world. As we are just beginning to apply machinery to field work on a great scale, and to make art and science our farmers and laborers, what may not be brought about when the general level of humanity is raised to the degree already attained by a few millions? Take the best ten thousand in any city or country, and imagine the whole population raised to their condition of sentiment and culture. It would advance the world at a leap two centuries, or perhaps ten! But because this cannot be suddenly done, must we abandon it? may we cease to aim at it? Because men have not yet ceased to fight like wild beasts, nation against nation, are they never to give it up? Nay, are they not rapidly advancing in the love of peace? Is it not a great thing when men first cease to carry clubs and spears as their habitual weapons? next, when war ceases to be a chronic amusement or excitement? then, when hired soldiers release all but a small portion of the population from bearing arms? finally, when arbitration begins to settle national disputes? I see nothing needed except a more steady, persistent, and courageous use of our school system and our Christian teaching, to bring the mass of men to a sense and refinement which would enable the world to realize the finest prophecies of saints and sages.

So long as man is human, that is, has the image of God in him, no matter how obstinate or stupid

he is, he may be slowly educated and trained by sufficient pains to the exercise of reason and the love and practice of duty. When I think of such a creature as Laura Bridgman, — blind, deaf, and of course dumb, with no senses but taste and feeling, yet, simply because she had a human soul in her, gradually trained to full intelligence, made a lady and a Christian, — I say there is no human being, however brutal, ignorant, stupid, or wicked, who, with a sufficient, and I mean only a practicable, amount of pains, care, and anxiety, might not be aroused, developed, trained, civilized, Christianized into a worthy, law-abiding, duty-doing, God-fearing, and man-serving child of faith and prayer. That so few are yet educated, civilized, and Christianized to that extent proves nothing, except that we have not yet educated our teachers. There are not yet enough of the human race thoroughly aroused, fully Christianized, rapidly to arouse and Christianize the rest. But they are slowly coming to that, and it will require no miracle to create a general level of virtue, worth, happiness, compared with which our present condition would seem semi-civilized. Nothing is needed but a steadier and more patient and courageous use of means already known and applied, — successfully, if only partially.

We have not yet fairly got agoing. Our own country is the first in which the full equality of mankind has ever been politically acknowledged; and here it is that common-school education for the first time is being perfected into a true science or

art. Here, too, social rights are within the reach of all, and private homes with abundant land accessible to all industrious persons. Nobody can doubt that, if civilization in spots rises higher elsewhere, the general level is here a whole degree higher than it has ever been elsewhere. No thanks to us. It is due to the labors of intelligent predecessors, who found a new hemisphere into which to import the best blood, ideas, and faith of the best part of the Old World. But we are yet only in the gristle. Nothing is less useful than self-applause, or self-admiration. We want all to be filled with a noble faith in the possible attainments of humanity; to accept our longings for a perfect Christian civilization as a divine prophecy; to be filled with a noble discontent at our present low attainments; and to call on all our powers and energies to enable us to propagate and produce a type of life and character such as Christ had, and such as God keeps in his Son always before the eye of his chosen children. Not as though we had already attained, let us press on toward the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord; and as *we* press forward, let us believe that in God's time all other men and women will press too, until every mountain and hill of folly and sin shall be made low, every valley of ignorance filled up, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

V.

THE HOLY SPIRIT:

WHAT IS IT, AND WHENCE COMES IT?

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

JOHN xvi. 13.

WE all know what the usual absence of useful result, agreement of opinion, or elucidation of fact is, when men meet and discuss matters of business, politics, reform, charity, finance, in a personal or party spirit, each with his own preconceived notion, his own love of his own way, his pride of opinion, his fixed prejudices in regard to men, things, and policies. Jangling, and arrogance, and heady passion, and obstinacy, and confusion, reign. Everybody wishes to triumph, or lead, or convert to his way of thinking; and people go away with their prejudices more fixed, their minds more confused, their passions more irritated, and the subject in debate only darkened with counsel.

But now, through the influence of some calm gentle, serious mind, let the *spirit of truth* — the love of truth for its own sake — enter and pervade

the place where any important question of policy is being considered, and how instantly all the conditions of inquiry are changed! A kind of childlike simplicity of motive and disinterestedness of feeling pervades the assembly. The various speakers, catching the sacred contagion of candor and sweetness, begin to chasten their angry tones; to put away their private passions; to listen to each other with frankness; to agree that certain narrow arguments, hitherto deemed pertinent, are irrelevant; to ignore the importance of mere majorities, brute force, or wilful opposition. Then the wisest and best begin to assume their rightful supremacy. The calmest, fairest, and most generous mind in the company is at length accepted as the teacher of the occasion. His arguments commend themselves; his motives seem least questionable, his policy the fittest to accept; and the company, lately a mob or an arena of mere selfish personal disputants, becomes an assembly controlled by honorable, gentle, and concurring counsels.

But what has happened? Is it the ascendency of some merely stronger will? That is a not uncommon thing in boards of direction, charity, and politics. But the peace that follows in that case is not the peace I have described. It is not the triumph of an individual will or an individual judgment that can ever give long and deep common satisfaction. No; it is only when the will or the judgment that leads is seen and felt to be, not the will or the judgment of the individual that rep-

resents it, but the will of justice, reason, truth,—impersonal principles and realities,—that the people who fall in with it feel that they are not agreeing with a leader or victor, but agreeing with the truth. It is only when their wills and their judgments are convicted by a will and judgment which is not personal to him who offers it, but is far above him, and stands related to everybody else as it does to himself, that the accord is voluntary, raises everybody's self-respect, is attended with no humiliation in those who surrender, and no pride in him who conquers. It is not he who is victor, it is not they who are conquered. It is error, and passion, and self-seeking, and partisanship, that are subdued; it is truth, and love, and wisdom, that have won the victory.

But how is it that this principle of peace, unity, and all-informing truth, is so usually latent and absent? Where does it keep itself when it does not act? Have you ever watched a crowd of boys worrying an animal,—every one with passion in his eyes, a lifted stick in his hand, and his feet swift to hem in and finish the life of the poor victim of their sport? But suddenly some nobler lad, stricken with a sense of the cruelty and folly of the hunt, says, "Boys, this may be fun for us, but it is death for the poor brute. Is it decent, generous, manly, to fall foul of this poor, unoffending beast, caught in our toils, and for mere sport to pound its life out with hideous cruelty?" Whence comes the spirit that rises to meet this appeal? Is it not already

in the boys, — there, — a part of their nature? But clearly it is not the most ready and spontaneous part. Appetite, love of fun, the huntsman passion, thoughtlessness, and indifference to consequences, are all more prompt. But are any of these spontaneous, agile, surface inclinations permanent, deep, abiding principles? Will any of them bear examination or reflection, or outlast excitement? But are not the sentiments of justice, charity, fitness, to which the appeal is so successfully made, dignified, profound, permanent principles or sentiments, — which are finally the only parts of our nature in which it forever agrees with itself and agrees with others who share that nature? It is, then, out of nothing new, foreign, strange, that the new spirit that shames, converts, and pacifies, in such a homely case, is drawn. It comes out of the depth of our common humanity, — out of the nobler, deeper, and more sacred parts of our common nature.

Now we hear, and with a certain hush of awe, of the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, teaching, uniting, converting, and subduing souls. And there is nothing on which religion depends so much as on the reality and influence of this power. We know that the Church has commonly represented it as a power descending upon men from above, — as when the Holy Ghost on the pentecostal day is said to have alighted like flames upon the Apostles' heads. We know, too, that the Holy Ghost is spoken of as coming and going, as being invited or being grieved away; as

being a person, the third person in the Trinity, whose influence is essential to finish the work which even Apostles may only begin.

I do not object to these figures: they are natural; they are especially natural to the Oriental mind; they are fitly in place in the New Testament, an Oriental book; and they belong to religion. But I beg you to notice that we use the same figures in regard to the Spirit of truth when, in a non-religious sense, we mean to represent it as active or inactive. We say, justice and charity entered into, or left, the hearts of the company. We say, when any noble conclusions are arrived at in days of great national crises, that patriotism seemed suddenly to descend from the spirits of departed patriots and enter into the hearts of the men who were ready to pledge themselves to the national cause. We used to say, in the days of our worst municipal corruption, that justice had deserted our courts and honesty our City Hall. What did we mean? that these virtues and powers were things separate or absent from the spirits of our rulers and judges, or merely silent and inoperative there?

What, then, is the Holy Spirit which Christ promised to *send* his disciples and followers after he had left them? To *send*, you notice, after his own ascent. Are truth, goodness, spiritual life and light, things of here and there, of absence and presence? Are the truths and powers of the multiplication table things of latitude and longitude, of heaven and earth, dependent on the paper on which

it is printed, or the memory that recalls or forgets it? What gives truth to the multiplication table? Surely the laws of the human mind in its relations to quantity. The multiplication table is a part of my mind. It must be got out of me before it can be put into me. Twice two is not four because somebody says so, or all men say so; but because, when I cognize the proposition, it is patently self-evident. So justice, honor, truth, goodness, are not things men have made, agreed on, fixed, united to reverence of their own free will; they are things which by their nature command our love, reverence, and assent, when we are truly ourselves. We may be so tossed with passion, so engrossed with brutal appetites, so sunk in ignorance of every kind, that our real, permanent, universal human nature does not respond to these appeals; just as children in a fever do not recognize their own mother's voice or features. But it is because we are then disordered, or undeveloped, or brutalized, or not tuned, and, like a neglected or yet unfinished or unstrung piano, yield no harmonies to the hand of the truest musician. But the most skilful musician can get no music except from the instrument and his own heaven-tuned sense, which is not his, but all men's, — is in him, but is over him and beyond him also.

Where, then, was the Spirit of truth which Jesus was to send his disciples? Surely it was in God. But where was God, so far as the hearts and minds of Christ's disciples were concerned? Surely he was in those disciples; and if the Spirit of truth was to

come to them, it was to come from God in them, and through and by his operation on their hearts, in the exercise and invigoration of their own higher and nobler powers and apprehensions. Where can God be as an object of thought and feeling, if not in our thoughts and feelings? How is he to be known and felt, if not in our knowing and feeling faculties? And if a spirit, and to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, surely he is more truly in and with our spirits than in any other shrine, or on any other throne, in the universe. Do not for an instant imagine that this doctrine has a tendency to confound God with our souls, in any other sense than that in which all spirit is inseparably associated with and a part of the Eternal Spirit, as all water tends to the ocean from which it came. Spirit is one and mind is one, and therefore Jesus speaks both of God and of himself as being in us, and of our being in them. I cannot know my child, my friend, except in my heart. I must make them internal objects of thought and affection, real partners of my mind and heart, to make them really mine; but this does not destroy their independent existence, or confound their influence with their substance or personality. So God is only to be known in his Spirit within our spirits. Even nature, sun, stars, woods, and fields, — all speaking of their glorious Creator, — must report themselves to my internal sense of beauty, and order, and sublimity, before they can reveal God. They reveal him *within*, and not without. It is not my eye that measures and enjoys

the stars, but my soul, my spiritual eye; no eagle sees the sun, or knows his glory, even though he may gaze unhooded at its noonday brightness. Nature lives for me as a system of order, beauty, and divine revelation only inwardly, in my soul. How much more God, whom I know only because I am a spirit whose filial birthright and sublime heritage it is to have a witness and revelation of God in my spiritual nature!

But if God is necessarily to our knowledge within, we being the temples in which he dwells, whence comes the Holy Spirit, and how does it speak and teach? Is it not God's spirit harmonizing our faculties from within? Is it not the posture and order into which his Spirit — which is only Himself, who is a spirit — brings us in beautiful and blessed hours, when his truth, justice, holiness, commend themselves in our consciousness with a power that suppresses the opposition, rebellion, or tyranny of our animal, our selfish, and our superficial selves?

Whence the solemn awe that hushes the heart, suppresses the appetite, fills with a sense of God's presence, quickens the conscience, of a child or youth first brought into the presence of death? It is simply due to the fact that for the first time the young soul realizes, if only for a short time, the awful mystery of our existence, and is filled with thoughts all springing from within, that for the time make its sports, its food, its common or ordinary feelings, unwelcome. The solemn novelty —

alas, how familiar it grows with experience!—shocks the young heir of time and sense, and jostles him with the play of emotions that come from the depths of his nature, from his latent soul, his sense of God and immortality, of duty and accountableness. It is God's spirit dawning in his spirit.

What is that fearful earthquake shock by which the hardened habitual sinner, rushing into some capital crime and imbruing himself in blood, is sometimes overwhelmed, until his soul is so haunted with terrors or shaken with remorse that death itself, by suicide or by the law, becomes a welcome relief to his agony? Is it anything new or external that has come to him? or only the waking up of a dormant faculty under the convulsive influence of his crime against nature and God?

What is that beneficent power, which, under the appeal of quickened souls that are themselves all alive to God and sensitive in every tissue of their hearts to his being and character, enables the true minister of God and Christ to arouse careless, slothful, pleasure-led and sin-bound souls to some sudden and arresting sense of the wasteful, wretched, abandoned state of their minds and hearts? "He has touched their hearts." They were buried, hidden, torpid, sleeping. But he has found his way to them. He has touched them. He has pushed back the springs that bolted in their sense of God and duty. He has let God loose in their souls. He was in them before, in a far deeper sense than the dryad that had grown into the heart of

the tree, or the good genius imprisoned in the rock. He was there, as the water was in the stone Moses smote. He aroused the conscience, he touched the heart, he converted the soul; and it was as when the sun, by the fall of the roof, finds a way into a cave where nothing will grow: instantly green things appear, the seeds of which have been waiting for its reviving face.

When Jesus told his disciples they should receive the Spirit of truth after he had departed, and not chiefly from himself, he meant simply this. He had given them so many new thoughts, aroused so many strong feelings, started so many fresh ideas, that the disciples were bewildered, things were out of proportion; they were not calm enough to receive the Spirit of truth. They had national, local, and personal ideas of his truth, ideas which were more or less Jewish, compounded with national ambitions and longings; and it was only after these ideas were shocked out of them by his death and final disappearance that they could contemplate the moral and spiritual essence of his teaching and feel its power in their own hearts. I am not concerned to show that many imperfect and erroneous ideas did not continue in the disciples' minds. That was to be expected in a revelation of moral and spiritual truth which had to be drawn out of the souls that received it. For Christ drew all he taught from God, and he drew it from God in his own God-touched and God-moved mind and spirit; and he could not communicate this ex-

cept by arousing in those he awakened something of his own sense of God in us. He did not speak of himself, but what his Father taught him; and he did not speak to men, but to God in men. And in so far only as God in each soul answered to God in him, as mountain peak to mountain peak replies, could his message pass. This has been the whole difficulty since; what is fixed in Christ's Gospel is only that which is fixed in men's knowledge and sense of God. As they have more, the Gospel opens more; as they are in darkness, the Gospel is clouded and perverted. There is a profound permanency and unchangeableness in Christianity; but it is not the unchanged interpretation of texts, or the uniformity of dogmas, but the unchangeableness of the eternal, moral, and spiritual truths affecting the relations of God and men. Love, justice, mercy, honor, truth, eternal life, and their relations to us and ours to them, do not change; nor does Christ, as the historic centre of the conjunction of God with men, the pattern of the perfect life, the image of God, the head of humanity, the Sun of righteousness, the eternal symbol of self-sacrifice, the lamb-like author of that meekness, humility, and gentleness which have flavored Christianity with their divine essence. The Spirit of truth is guiding into all truth, and in every generation it adds to the store.

Christianity, if it is to hold its name and office,— as surely it is, — can do so, not as a system of dogmas, not as a fixed and finished revelation coming

from outside the human soul, but as an ever-flowing revelation, which began, not with Christ as a private will or person, but with Christ as one who spake as man never spake before, — from the centre of a heart in perfect union with God, from God immanent in the soul of humanity. This is the glory of the Gospel and the fortress of its power and permanency. It has no war with science or philosophy, with opinion or theology. It is merely the triumph and victory of a deeper and more copious spring from the Divine Source, which has proved to be the river of God, running when all other streams fail, longer, fuller, and yet more full, as time lasts.

I need not ask why the mountains and lakes in the Northwest were chosen to be the sources of the Mississippi, or how that river, by its breadth of valley and relations to the trend of the water-sheds and smaller valleys, was fitted to be the Father of Waters and the shaping and decisive physical feature in our national geography: it is simply a fact. I need not ask why Jesus Christ was chosen, raised up, empowered, and made equal to the work of animating the souls of men with a fuller, more lasting, ever expansive, and ever more tender sense of God and duty, and love for each other, and disposition and ability to help on and upward our race. I stand merely on the fact. I say it is a fact that Christianity has concentrated and led and inspired the human race for eighteen hundred years, and, in connection with Mosaic law, antecedently from the beginning of history; that the hope of civ-

ilization is identified with its sway; that it is not according to the spirit of truth to make it answerable for the errors, vulgarities, mistakes, that have mixed with it from human ignorance; that it is no more responsible for the wars, dogmas, and sectarian spite that have disgraced its disciples, and even its priests, than Liberty is responsible for or the cause of the license that parodies it, but which has its rise in the bondage of sin and self. I say that it is misleading to charge the weaknesses and follies of its imperfect disciples to its pure spirit and unchanging truth. Moreover, it is against the spirit of truth to say that its disciples, bad and imperfect as they are, are not the best part of the race, are not the best hope of the future. They do not speak by the spirit of God who call Jesus accursed or deny his name. In no testimony has the spirit of truth ever brought so many millions of intelligent people freely to concur as in a testimony to the holiness of Jesus and his fitness to be called Master and Lord. But the spirit of truth is slowly and surely revealing more things and higher truths out of the Gospel than most of its disciples are prepared to receive. It can teach nothing that will disturb or destroy its own real messages; for in his holiness, justice, love, and truth, God is not only consistent with himself, but ever human as well as divine; for our nature, human as it is, is to us his holiest habitation, his deepest voice, and his most sacred channel. It is the Holy Spirit that calls you by the voice of your own souls to repent-

ance and newness of life. Nothing is so solemn, awful, or blessed, as the thought that we live, move, and have our moral and spiritual being in God. You have from your very creation fallen into the hands of the living God; and it is a fearful, but also a glorious thing. You can never abdicate your nature, nor escape out of God's presence. Only in admitting his Holy Spirit to sway and control your soul can you find joy and peace in that Spirit in time or eternity.

VI.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LEAST AMONG HUMAN SOULS.

Not one of them is forgotten before God.

LUKE xii. 6.

FROM certain points of view nothing seems cheaper, or less entitled to remembrance, than human lives. They come like the waves, that break on the shore and die, and every new tide washes out the traces of its predecessor. Thousands of lives begin every day; thousands end every day. The cradle is always full, and so is the bier; and what comes between them in ordinary cases is usually little marked by any but the nearest of kin, and is forgotten by neighbors in a year. Few raise their heads above the common level, and ordinary lives are hid and lost in the general mass. The class to which they belong is important, but they individually are not important. The commercial class is a great one, but how little the single trader or shop-keeper is missed! The world goes on much the same, though war is always destroying thousands of lives somewhere, and pestilence is sweeping away still more. Shipwreck sends a thousand men and women, in one undistinguishable grave, to the bot-

tom of the sea. Earthquake swallows up whole cities; tidal waves drown a half-million of people in a night. Who can keep the register of mortality, who maintain the security of the grave, or even with brass and marble mark indelibly the spot where what have been kings and prophets once slept? "No man knoweth his sepulchre," was said of so great a benefactor as Moses.

When I walk amid the village graveyards of New England, I find thousands of decaying stones, half illegibly covered with names representing lives once active and useful, perhaps, that are now, after only a century, wholly without any memory among men. The name means nothing definite, calls up no recollection, and matches with nothing special. It was a man, a woman, a child; but the name calls back no image, and is associated with no character. How frail and insignificant such experiences make human life appear, and especially one individual life! How little importance seems to attach to what so soon becomes as untraceable as a drop of rain that has fallen into the ocean! The grains of sand on the shore, the autumn leaves scattered by the winter wind, appear to be little less worth distinguishing from each other than are ordinary human lives. Taken together they are all-important. They make families, and towns, and armies that fight for liberty, and parties that determine who shall rule over us. They subdue the world, and make the wilderness a garden; they dig our canals, and plant and reap our fields, and buy and consume the industry of others,

and constitute together the great common life of the world. Thus the mighty army moves forward. It loses a thousand men a day, recruits as many more; at the end of the campaign, it is the same army, and has all the glory of its common achievement. The ten thousand men, stark and in bloody shrouds, their names unknown and their graves unmarked, lay in the track of its perilous advance. *They* are forgotten, but the army-corps is recorded in history, and its deeds live a thousand years.

Thus, to the historian, philosopher, statistician, it is not the life of the individual that is important, but the life of the race, the nation, the party, the church. What cares the life-insurance office who it is that dies to make up its average of bad lives, or who lives to make up its average of good lives? It asks how *many*, not *who*, or what.

It was said that every wooden sleeper in the bed of the Panama Railroad represented another sleeper of flesh and blood who died in the malarious swamps through which the track was laid. What matters it now what their names were, or who the people were? Their work remains, — a very important work for millions, and for many generations to come; but what cares the world or the race to remember the thousands of individual workmen who took up the spades others had dropped, and at last, by relays of living men, and at the cost of daily deaths in scores, achieved the desired end? The cheapness of life; the terrible generalization of human history, recalling, not individuals, but classes; the available

use of single lives, not to themselves, but only to the race or the world, — which appropriates their strength and faculties, adds it to the common account, and remembers the separate lives as little as the capitalist recalls the single dollars that help to make up his million, — these facts, so true, so essential to the world's life, are fearfully discouraging to faith, to self-respect, and to the Christian view of the importance of each and every soul to itself and to God.

Of course, the melancholy impression I have described is largely due to a mere infirmity of human faculties, to dulness of imagination, to shortness and narrowness of comprehension. In fact, the individual is not this mere indifferent, monotonous, undistinguishable atom in a mass, where he is little or nothing, and the mass is all important. The reverse is more true. After all, it is individuals alone that have mind, or heart, or will, or knowledge, or worth. There is no such thing, except in metaphor, as a nation possessing a common mind, a common conscience, a common will. All the mind, conscience, will, there is, is in individuals. All the love, sympathy, worth, hope, faith, in the world, is in individual breasts; all the life is in individual shape; there is no such thing as a generation, or a race, except on paper and in words. An army is not a mass of humanity, in which the individuals are nothing and the organization or name all. It is really a collection of individual men, whose force lies in what each individual brings, in his physical manhood, his cour-

age, his power to bear burdens and endure fatigue, to other men, each individually important; and the strength of the *whole* is a mere addition of individual minds, hearts, wills, and muscles. There is no such thing as a happy *nation*. It is the individuals that compose the nation who feel all the happiness there is, — possess all the knowledge, wisdom, taste, patriotism, that the nation, only metaphorically and for convenience, is said to possess.

You look upon the sleeping dust of an ancient town, and moralize upon the brevity and insignificance of human life and the individual's career. You forget that, in its day, this commingled, indistinguishable heap of dust clothed individual human hearts and minds, and was the incarnation of individual will, and affection, and energy, and thought; that happy households, beautiful brides, and proud husbands, and beloved children, that looked upon the graves of their predecessors just as you do upon theirs, were making the community they then belonged to alive, busy, useful, and happy, as you are now perhaps making yours. You forget how much room there was in their lives and hearts for things that were not public, but strictly private, — all the comedies and tragedies of domestic love and sorrow, of hope and fear, of imagination and conscience; how much they struggled with the great and permanent problems of life and duty, God and immortality; how large a part of their life was inward, and moral, and spiritual, — strictly individual and personal, not a mere part of the

life of the town or community. There was, perhaps, never a worn-out frame laid in this heap, whose whole story was known to a single human being. For deep below the public life, or the family life, or anything visible or audible to the closest observer, runs the inner life of thought and feeling, of motive and purpose, of self-questioning, of aspiration, of suffering and failure, for every individual soul. There are wonders and mysteries, curiosities and obscurities, connected with the least distinguished human soul or life, which, could they be wholly unveiled, would be more interesting than the so-called life of a nation. What is public, or plays into a system or plan, or becomes utilized, or belongs to the world or the community, is the smallest part of a man. It is his surface, his outside, that the world sees and uses and calls himself. And the world cares little for the real man, — his heart and soul and spirit. It wants the Irishman's muscle and his vote and his skill in carrying the hod; but what does it care or know of the love he bears his wife and children, or the puzzled thoughts he brings to the problem of life, or the courage with which he girds himself to his daily toil for the bread of his lowly home, or the sacrifices he makes for the support of the faith that cheers his illness and decline and fills out all the wants of his otherwise unfurnished life?

The world's trade, its politics, its eating and drinking, nay, even its literature and written poetry, its public religion, its institutions, and its sta-

tistics, are but a poor, shallow expression of the grandeur of the mental and moral struggles, the unrecorded and unspoken pains and aspirations, the real internal history, of the individual lives, the mysterious private souls, that are thinking and feeling their way, sinning and repenting, loving and hating, struggling for a hold on unseen things, and having a world all their own in the impregnable castle of an invisible and unvisitable privacy of spirit. Watch closely enough your own thoughts, feelings, and inward experiences, and observe that not even your nearest friend, your wife, your child, shares the largest part of your life, — knows, or can know, what after all makes up you and your history. If the world despises the individual life, except in its few conspicuous leaders, how often the private soul looks upon all that the world thinks important, lasting, significant, and worthy of commendation, as trifling and vain and not connected with its real life!

I often follow in fancy some shiftless-looking, ragged, unshorn vagabond, a tramp or waif, whose unsmiling, purposeless face arrests my sympathy, with the feeling that I would give more to enter into the inward thoughts, speculations, or even wayward and shifting feelings of that poor creature, than to have the key to Dante's Inferno, or Plato's Republic. There is a tragedy, and perhaps a comedy, mixed up in that bewildered soul's inner life, which, if he could tell it, as he cannot, would be worth one of the lost books of Livy. Literature is finding

this out. Genius always knew it. Shakespeare puts his highest wisdom into the mouth of his fools; and all men of insight perceive that to touch a human life, a human soul, anywhere below its surface or its articulate language, is to touch a spring of intensest interest, whether it be in a camp of drunken miners, or in a cellar of boisterous pot-politicians a week or two before a general election. It is the strange wealth of common human beings in their individual selves, — their originality, their heroism, their generosity, their humor, their poetry and coarseness, their piety and blasphemy, but, withal, their separate and distinct being, unlikeness and likeness, solitude in company and grandeur in grotesqueness and vulgarity, — that warns us against the too ready acceptance of wholesale popular judgments in estimating the wealth and worth of individual men and women, be they never so low and mean, never so little known or commemorated by their fellows or their successors.

The truth is, men's lives and souls are not commensurate with this small earth and its transitory interests and affairs. The world and its history concern themselves with the least part of human faculties and aspirations. There is a small practical part of man's whole nature that is alone needed here for public ends and industries. Like some beautiful esculent plants, of which only a hundredth part is edible, and that part is cut out and called valuable, while the rest is flung upon the dung-heap, — the discarded part having perhaps in itself what

is vastly more wonderful and beautiful, though it is called useless because it serves not for food, — so a man is estimated and valued in the community chiefly for what he does to preserve the state, or swell the taxes, or increase the consuming power. So he be an orderly neighbor, an industrious man, a producer, a consumer, a patron of society, he is a good citizen; no matter what his motives of action, what his personal affections, what the level of his inward thoughts, what the relations of his hidden life to God and duty. Selfish, calculating, low-toned, unspiritual, without aspiration, dull of conscience, cold of heart, undevout and unmoved by holy influences, — what does all that matter to the world, the market, the exchange, the party, the church? Does he not pay his bills? sustain necessary institutions? has not his life been useful, and has he not escaped all censure from the law, and left his fellow men in this world without any right to blame him? Certainly. Why, then, all this exhortation to prepare to meet his God? Why all this pulpit complaint of his alleged unspirituality, of his defective motives and character before a Christian tribunal? Simply, because it is about his *soul* that the pulpit and its Almighty Instituter are concerned. But is it not his *soul* that society and the world have wanted? No; mainly only his external and world-wise faculties. They have wanted his superficial self; his intelligence in practical affairs; his co-operation in industry; his conformity to useful customs; his law-abiding, tax-paying, decorous, and decent life. All

praise for that, considering how often the world fails to have even thus much from its denizen! But every man knows and feels that, above and under and over all for which society, the world, or his fellow men can judge him or measure him, there lives his real self, his soul, his immortal and spiritual part, his thoughts of God and duty, his ideal aspirations, his higher affections beyond the mere instincts of family life, his awe, his inward purity, his thoughts that lay hold upon eternity, his fidelity to the awful sentiment of duty. It is this *soul*, this great part, this infinitely largest part of the man, that has created altars and temples and art and worship and poetry, and done all those works of supererogation, in the form of disinterestedness, self-sacrifice, and faith, of character not aiming merely to satisfy the standards of the world, but aiming to content its own yearnings for excellence and the holy eye of God. Here lie the domains of personal religion, of individual significance, of true human dignity, and hence comes the protest against all the common standards, so demoralizing and so belittling to humanity, that measure man by his short earthly life and his mere practical relations to time and sense and what we call the world or society.

The most superstitious or blind instincts of faith in the least intelligent forms of Christian belief are nearer the real facts of our human significance as individuals, than the secular theories of the worldly-wise, who would make this world the be-all and the

end-all of the man and the race. It is the restless wing of the Spirit that disturbs that stagnant air of worldly content in which a merely secular wisdom is accustomed to breathe. The very vices of humanity — the results of man's immortal passions thwarted and perverted, because his longings for happiness are disproportioned to his state, and he seeks to slake in the shallow stream of his earthly circumstances what is only to be fitly quenched in the river of God — are better than the dry and arid virtues of worldly satisfaction and content.

All that saints and seers have said and sung about the vastness and glory of the individual soul, affirming that one soul outweighs the spheres of planets and sun and stars in dignity and worth, is strictly true, though only realized in the higher moods of the mind. But when we reflect that our spirits are made in the Divine image, and are capable of everlasting development in the celestial likeness; and when we know that matter gains no moral glory by magnitude, however vast, that endless worlds on worlds have not one single thought, feeling, aspiration, of their own, and that we alone, or spirits like us, can ever perceive their beauty or order, or rise to the thought of their Maker,—we can begin to understand that, though the heavens may roll up like a scroll and the stars cease to give their light, the humblest soul that lives will survive the decay, and be looking on a new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness, when they are no more.

Yes, not one of them is forgotten before God, — not a sparrow, not a lily of the field, not a hair of the head; how much less one immortal soul! Let no man dare to think lightly of himself, however humbly he may think of his attainments, his present life, and his non-importance in human estimates. No man can afford to forget that, if he has any lofty conceptions of God or Christ, or of other men or other characters whom he deems great, he owes it to the immense discerning powers of his own God-endowed soul. The universe exists for him only in his own thought; all history, all humanity, all eternity, he realizes only because he has a soul. How like and equal we are in the common capacities we have as souls, notwithstanding the alleged inequalities and unlikenesses of different souls! To think, to love, to know, to aspire, to adore, — this belongs to us as men. What noblest brute, lion, eagle, leviathan, shares in the smallest degree this divine distinction! Yet men talk of springing from the brutes, — nay, they talk of savages and inferior races of men as being near the brutes! They think and speak of individual men, not distinguished by extraordinary gifts, as if they were ignoble and hardly worth considering; as if they lived only to render some humble service, to dig and plough and hew, and die and give place to others no worthier and no less worthy, but all alike cheap and common, and with no claims to much human respect or any divine consideration. Why, the exceptional genius of Shakespeare himself was not so great and worthy of

consideration as what Shakespeare shared with you and all men. To think at all is more distinction than to think more deeply and brilliantly than others; to love at all, than to love more or better; to be a soul, than to be a less or a more fully developed spirit. The rose, whether a bud or a full-blown flower, whether a moss-rose or a hedge-rose, is still a rose; and no daisy, or dahlia, or pink, or anemone, can be that; and any rose can be improved by care and attention, until it will become glorious as the queen of flowers. Man alone can grow God-wise. He is made a little lower than the angels only, and is over all other creatures as a king. It is not his exceptional beauty, or gifts, or culture, that give him this distinction. It is his *nature;* and that nature is priceless and glorious in every single specimen.

Ah, think not meanly of yourselves, and sink into no common mass of being, as if your individuality were ever destructible or not all significant. You are bounded and confined by the impassable limits of that mystery we call "ourselves." You can be nobody but yourself. You cannot hide away, nor be lost in any crowd. You carry the glory and the burden of your individuality. You have an immortal title in this personality you possess. Seas could not drown it out, nor could fire, though it were of the heavens in flame, burn it up. You are, and you must be, eternally yourself, and you have a soul, whose powers and faculties lay hold on eternity. And this self is directly related to God, — is dear,

nay, precious to him. It contains the awful, the sublime, the ineffable, as well as the trivial, the present, and the earthly. You may escape, by preoccupation, by too adroit a fitness to the immediate present, by too active and successful a worldliness, — you may escape the pressing sense of the infinite and divine! But the great issues of moral life and death, — of selfish gluttony for immediate gratification, and the fixed desire for godliness, of right and wrong, of heavenly-mindedness and worldly-mindedness, — though postponable, are not to be adjourned without day. God is not so busy that he overlooks you. Your conscience is not so dull and dead that it may not be — nay, that it *must* not be — finally awakened! The glozing lies and flatteries and false standards of the world are not permanent judgments. There is in you, the least of you, what only God could give out of his inmost and highest being, a spiritual existence. You cannot shake it off, nor trample it to death. It is beyond suicide. What mean you by stifling the dignity and significance of your soul? Think you the blood royal will not arouse and accuse you somewhere, and press upon you your obligations, and contrast your royal calling with your beggar's life? No, no man is forgotten before God. No man is insignificant in all the immortal list, and no man is other than a countersigned proof-copy of his Maker, in whom God will defend his rights and claim his work. The moment any man aims to live to his Maker's glory, to live like a man, and not like a servant

of the world or the Devil, to live for God's eye and service, to live from the divine motive,— the only saving one, love,— which is alike love for excellence, truth, goodness, and love for God, and love for God's children,— that moment the world with its false standards and prizes recedes and falls into its place. Then the humble, the pure and good, become our true nobility. Then we discern the difference between the greatness of station, wealth, talents, and the greatness of aspiration, faith, obedience, and holiness. Then the saintly servant is greater than his unholy master, the faithful subject than his faithless king. Then every true soul, however forgotten, unknown, or undesired among men, has its divine patron, companion, and friend in God, the Father of spirits, its pattern in Christ, the saviour of souls, and its sure and steadfast hope of immortal blessedness. Not one of them is forgotten before God!

VII.

SELF-RENUNCIATION:

THE REST OF JESUS.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

MATTHEW xi. 28, 29.

IT is not labor or even heavy burdens that prevent rest, for work is the very condition of rest, which is only sweet to those who have earned it. It is unwilling, profitless labor; labor exacted by taskmasters; labor against our choice and will; labor that demeans and enslaves; labor that has no pleasure while we do it and no satisfaction when we look back upon it; labor without hope, without progress, without reward. To speak of labor, whether of body or mind, of heart, or head, or hands, as an evil in itself, is to speak idly and thoughtlessly. As well speak of the perpetual work of the natural organ, the fleshly heart, in whose incessant beat our physical life is centred, as an evil; or of the ceaseless circulation of the blood, or the thrill of the nerves, or the activity of the brain. To live is to work; and those live most who work most. Even of bodily

labor we may safely say that it probably furnishes, in the natural satisfaction which comes from the use of the muscles and fibres, from the relish it gives to food and sleep, from the joy and pride of exercising strength and of accomplishing certain acts and ends, far the largest sum of ordinary human happiness. Certainly the daily laborer who earns his bread in the sweat of his brow is a happier as well as nobler being than any drone, who dozes, or idles away his time, and rusts his powers, physical and moral, in sloth and what is called self-indulgence. Work is physical, and mental, and moral; and in every form it is putting human powers to the only use by which their capacity of blessing us is tested.

Play is only a willing form of work, and those whose work is not appointed for them by a kind Providence have to invent play of some sort, at which they may work to occupy their time and faculties. "Life," said a cynical Londoner, "would be endurable, were it not for its pleasures." I think I understand him perfectly; for what men of the world, and women too, call *pleasures*, meaning shows and games and gregarious sports, appear to me to be generally tiresome, stupid ways of killing time. I cannot but wonder at the small resources of many, when I observe what amuses them. A procession of coaches driven by idlers, all together affording no interest comparable with the view of a single stage-coach tugging up hill with an honest load on useful business, will fill our chief avenue and our Central

Park with thousands of people, who will waste a whole half-day waiting to see how luxurious wealth amuses itself. Really, danger, with the possible loss of life and limb, seems the only ingredient in some of our recent fashionable sports that gives them any human interest.

Work then, however heavy its burden, is not what makes the human lot arduous or distasteful. And we may be sure that Jesus never proposed to lessen it or supersede it. The strain of the muscles, the activity of the limbs, the glow of exercise, the bearing of burdens and responsibilities, — the putting forth of the powers of body and soul, — toiling at schemes, at problems, at knowledge, at politics, at inventions, — all this is the chief and ordained privilege and blessing of life. A tree might as well rejoice in the barrenness of its branches, and pray to be delivered from the toil of bringing forth blossoms, leaves, and fruit, as that a man should congratulate himself on his leave to be idle, on his freedom from work, on his escape from responsibility, and toil, and occupation. The wild animals, beasts, and birds, shut up in cages, — what would they not give to regain the laborious privilege of earning their own living by motion and fatigue? They perish of dulness and sloth enforced by their captors.

Thousands of women die of *ennui* and loss of their muscular and organic powers, from a petted or fashion-bred release from useful work, bodily exercise, or cares that are natural and wholesome. They are not half as fortunate as their domestic servants,

who are in health and spirits because they have regular and active services to perform.

What we need is not release from bodily or mental labor, but release from the torment of personal self-will, of desires that can never be satisfied, — of self-considerings, and egotism, and false and useless longings.

What was there in Jesus's life to invite day labor, or any other kind of honest work, to choose it, in preference to its own? Was it less active, or less suffering, or less exposed? Was it gayer, or more varied? Did it carry a less heavy burden, or was it provided with any superior outward solaces? No; Jesus was foot-sore, and often without where to lay his head. He plucked the raw wheat as he walked through the fields, for food. But he had, as he said, bread to eat that his disciples knew not of. What was it? He tells us himself. It was meekness and lowliness of heart. This was the yoke he asked his disciples to put on, and promised it should give them *rest*. How so? What have meekness and lowliness of heart to do with rest? Ah! that is a great question, not to be explained in a moment, but worth a lifetime to learn the answer. At any rate it is the secret of Jesus, and on it his religion is founded. He promises rest; and he offers meekness and lowliness of heart as the prime and essential conditions of it. He claims to be at rest himself even on the cross, and he gives his own meekness and lowliness as the causes of his restfulness.

What then was Jesus's rest? Clearly it was

not release from work, from sorrow, from bodily wants, or exhausting cares. It was not idleness, nor pleasure-seeking, nor gain-finding. It was not praise, nor success, nor wealth, nor station. It was rather the abnegation of all desire for these things. It was no form of personal gratification; it was rather the surrender or suppression of all purely personal preferences. He did not wish to be rich, or luxurious, or free from care, or safe from aches and pains, or above the common lot. He chose to enter into all men's griefs and sorrows and exposures, and to share their daily toils and cares. He went afoot about his daily rounds of humane service. He was careless of food and raiment. He slept on the deck of the little ship in the storm, from very weariness. And yet he talks so convincingly of rest and peace and a joy that nothing could abate, that we are sure he had something in his heart and mind that was not only a full equivalent for all he suffered or lacked, but a thousand times better, — nay, incomparably more, and more restful. Well, what was it? and was it anything we can have too? For if it was something peculiar to his nature and endowments, it is in vain to seek it for ourselves. That it was *not* so is plain. For it is not something we have to get, but only something we have to surrender! What is the opposite of meekness and lowliness of heart? Of course it is self-assertion and puffed up conceit. In one word, it is self-importance, and self-cupidity, and self-glorification, and self-concern; a disposition to have our

own way, and to build ourselves up on our own plan, and to seize and appropriate what we covet, regarding all others as competitors and rivals, and making them the stepping-stones of our personal ambition. Jesus says, *that* is not the divine way, and therefore not the true human way; that not rest, but fever and disappointment, and envy, malice, and discontent, are the end of that self-seeking way, which all men begin with trying and many persist in pursuing to the last, but which has no rest in it for any. Self-renunciation is the yoke Jesus locked on his own neck, — as all heroes and martyrs and saints have done, — and found rest amid ceaseless and suffering labors ever after. *Self*-renunciation! Ah! that is a word that frightens and appalls. But only because we do not sufficiently consider what it is. *Self, self!* the idol of the unthinking, the inexperienced, and the unwise! As if self, in the sense of the egotist and the self-loving and self-saving, were the central part of our soul's life! We truly never *find* our true selves in their real glory and strength until we *lose* ourselves. It is not that our Creator means to deny our cravings for happiness, but only that we mistake their source or their fulness, when we fancy that they are to proceed from any self-saving, or self-considering, or self-seeking method. Jesus conquered the pangs of all egotistic desires by surrendering them. He was able to estimate at its true value all that men blindly crave and fret about, and wear themselves into a sour discontent because they cannot get. And I suppose

he was able to do it because he knew the immense joy and peace which come to souls that make holiness and duty and love of universal interests and of others' welfare and happiness the main-springs of their life, instead of egotistic and selfish aims and ends. And in knowing this more fully and perfectly than others, he had found the secret of rest.

He was not alone in this discovery. It is not even wholly special to Christianity. The cross is the Christian symbol, and it means self-renunciation, and enlargement through it. But no saint, in any religion that ever lifted a soul to peace, has found any other way; and, thank God, it is no impracticable and unused way, nor one we do not all know something about; we have walked some few steps in it, if it be not our habitual road. And we never took one step in that way without finding it a way of peace. Who ever conquered or put self away, or forgot himself an hour under the attraction of disinterested service of others, and did not date back to it as to the most restful and blessed period and experience of his life? I have again and again found busy men, whom the world had afterwards caught up and strangled with its baits and its cares, looking back, at the close of life, upon some few months or years when they were free to work in generous labors for others, — perhaps only in a Sunday school or a church charity, — as to the happiest and loftiest period of their lives. And God is not so careless of us as to allow selfish cupidities and self-reference to become unchecked extinguishers

of our larger selves. He makes good husbands love their wives, and good wives their husbands, better than themselves. He baits our latent faculties for unselfishness with the appealing claims of our own children. He flings family affections against our rocky self-love, and breaks it down. He makes the claim of country, the love of neighbors, the beauty of nature, the charm of art, the appeal that genius, or goodness, or great gifts fasten on our self-forgetting and generous admiration, a beginning of the surrender of our lower, egotistic self. We learn slowly to believe that the more we can get rid of self, — of the love of praise, or the love of power, or the love of what is personal and exclusive, — the more we can chasten and diminish our reliance on externals, on conventional or accidental things, — the more we can draw our happiness from what is universal, everlasting, and self-forgetting, — so much the more have we to draw upon, the larger are our resources, the more independent are we, and the more at rest.

We begin our lives in this blessed way; namely, in a restful freedom from personal anxieties. The child is not anxious about its daily bread; is not fastidious about its food; is not concerned about the morrow; feels itself to be the owner of the world; finds friends in the persons next to it; enjoys the air, the light, motion, freedom, the exercise of its curiosity, the use of its faculties. It does not easily learn to say *I*, or to separate itself from the universe. Its notions of private property are vague;

its tastes are simple and pure, its affections flowing, its sympathies ready. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy"; and this heaven is freedom from egotism and self-consideration. The child is at rest in its most laborious plays or occupations, because it has no ulterior thoughts or longings. It lives in what engages it, and so all the universe serves it gladly.

We lose this innocency and self-abandonment when we come to the end of childhood. Then we discover that we have a *self* to care for; a competition, a struggle, and a conflict; a need for appropriating and guarding our earnings; an exclusion of others' claims. And most men do not safely pass through this trial and reach their childhood again, by voluntary self-surrender of the selfishness which necessarily accompanied their passage from unconsciousness and innocency into consciousness and virtue. Jesus understood this perfectly, and therefore he said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." He of course did not expect men and women to return to the innocence, and ignorance, and carelessness of children; but he did expect them to make that life of faith and trust, that enjoyment of others' happiness as a part of one's own, that large, unanxious, because believing and hoping and unselfish life, a life in which the great common blessing, the charm of living for itself alone, — of thought, feeling, aspiration, sympathy, service, — which really gives its beauty and divineness to child-

hood, — should become the voluntary conquest and choice of our maturity.

This heavenly state of rest from vain and distracting personal desires; this use and enjoyment of what is common to all, and free to all; this life in the common life; this delight in human faces, and strangers' smiles; this joy in others' successes, talents, and gifts; this freedom from wants that are not necessities; this independence of others' judgments or conventional estimates; this life in the universal, — with God, with nature, with humanity, — O, what a deliverance it is from the servitude of personal cupidities and selfish cravings for praise, for place, for the means of ostentation! Let a man only be able to do his best, and be satisfied, without one concern for what others say about it; let him find his reward in virtue itself, and not in the external returns it brings; let him do noble and great things, and forget them, and go on to do more noble and greater things, and forget them, and he may escape renown and the taint of praise; but he will not be forgotten where it is worth while to be remembered, — in the heart of God. Let him love his race, whether his race loves him, or tells him so, or not; let him love God, and be more blessed in loving him than even in being loved by him, — which is not his concern, — and he is at rest. He has his happiness and his peace within his own control. The love I bear to others is not dependent on their love for me; that is their business, not mine. So the Gospel tells us to love our

enemies; we cannot always make them love us in return, but that is not the all-important thing. It is our rest, not theirs, we are responsible for; and that is secure when we have expelled evil, or vindictive passions, or an unhallowed indifference, from our hearts.

I know how vigorous men of the world scoff at this Christian ideal. God knows how few attain it. God knows how unpractical it sounds, and how opposed to what we call human nature; for we commonly assume that what is base and mean and selfish in human nature is its most real part, and its governing part. But it is really because human nature in its permanent and immortal part absolutely *demands* the Christian ideal, and can never be satisfied with what is short of it, that the Gospel denounces egotism and selfishness as any final rule or goal. An immortality of the cupidities, vanities, ambitions, self-flatteries, triflings, and jealousies of ordinary life, with a careful hoarding of a steady percentage of all that passes through our hands to our personal advantage, would surely be an immortality to dread and avoid. We should shudder to have our selfishness aggrandized, and perpetuated, and projected into an endless futurity. Think of carrying our avarice, or our ambition, or our jealousies, or our vanity, or our hatreds with us, with an ever-increasing magnitude of growth, into a timeless or eternal state! Who does not see that, unless we can become children again, in our indifference to exclusive ownership,

exclusive sympathies, — in our freedom from selfish burdens, and exhausting passions, and a self-considering life, — unless we can live broadly in God's universe, accepting its common blessings as its best, rejoicing in all men's happiness as our own, finding our life outside of what is personal, in the love and honor of truth, goodness, justice, and mercy, we shall never be at rest on earth or in heaven.

Philosophy and faith unite in this conclusion. If we wish rest, we must get it by self-abnegation; that is, by placing what is divine, universal, common, and inclusive, what cannot be appropriated, — like the air, and the sunshine, and the rain, — like virtue, goodness, truth, — like fellowship, sympathy, adoration, — like God and his love, — above all that is strictly personal, or capable of being made so. And every man is finally valued by his fellow men, as well as by God and the Gospel, in strict proportion to his exemplification of this setting of the universal above the personal or the selfish. The man who loves his neighbors better than himself, — his country, justice, humanity, God, better than himself, — is the man whom his neighbors, his country, humanity, and God permanently honor and love and hold up to everlasting fame. Who cares about the brief magnates whose palaces, or fortunes, or influence in the exchange or the caucus, lift them for a generation into fame, and make them the centre of a buzzing admiration from hearts steeped in a selfishness like their own? They are nothing when the earth cov-

ers them; and no tears, and no loving, grateful hearts, visit their graves. But let any man be seen and known to love his kind better than himself, let him give his heart, his blood, his prayers, his example to his race, without stint or self-saving, and the more perfectly he extinguishes self, egotism, and all self-saving emotions, the more unfeignedly is he the object of deathless honor and of a glory that is only the radiance of his inward worth. This is God's heart incarnate in his child. Jesus showed it in perfection. If we wish to enter into his rest, we must deny ourselves, and take up his cross, and follow him in service and love. This is his yoke, and we shall find it easy; for nothing galls and festers like the covetousness, the egotism, and the selfishness which are the bane of humanity and the curse of life, and which it is the whole object of the Gospel to overthrow and expel. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

VIII.

WORK AND REST.

Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

PSALM lv. 6.

THE Psalmist shows his common humanity with us all, in this confession of a longing to escape, by change of place and circumstances, from the troubles that environed him, and which made peace and contentment almost impossible. He was living in the midst of cares and anxieties; the voices of enemies filled his ears; the oppression of the wicked shocked his eyes. Fearfulness and trembling, as if of the terrors of death, possessed him, as he witnessed the violence and strife of the city, from whose streets deceit and guile departed not. Betrayed by his own friends and acquaintance and those he had selected for his guides, by those with whom he had taken sweet counsel and walked unto the house of God in company, his courage temporarily failed him; he could not at that moment accept his lot, without bitter misgivings and complaints. He longed to escape from these painful and overwhelming trials, and exclaimed, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then

would I fly away and be at rest." His real thoughts were not those which our reverence for his station and character have usually interpreted these words to import. It was not up into the unseen world, where God and angels dwell, that David would then have used his wings to carry him. For in the very next verse he explains himself, and says, "Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." David is sighing for retirement from the world; for release from contact with the affairs of men, and from the sight of their follies and sins. If he had had wings, he would have flown into some oasis of the desert and hid himself near its cooling spring, protected and isolated by desert plains from all followers; he would have banished cares and anxieties, by seeking some leafy covert, whose pathless thicket they could not penetrate.

Well! Suppose God, in answer to his ardent prayer, had given the man after his own heart the wings he desired, and, mounting upon them, David had flown into the loneliest and quietest seclusion that Arabia Felix or the banks of the Euphrates afford. As he reflected there, in his solitude and quietness, upon the affluent affections, the large faculties of thought, the powers of great usefulness, which he had received from his Maker, and speedily began to think for what they were bestowed, would not his sense of the needs of the nation he had left, the wicked city he had

abandoned to its sins, the cause of truth and duty he had deserted, have brought a remorse to his heart bitterer than the sight of any wickedness not his own, or the injustice and vindictiveness of his worst enemies and former but faithless friends could have produced? And as he contemplated the uselessness of his coveted retirement, would he not have prayed more earnestly than before, that, instead of the wings of a dove which had brought him soothingly away, he might receive the wings of an eagle to carry him swiftly back to the deserted post of duty and of service to his Maker and his kind? Or supposing he had evaded this sense of responsibility for the use of his gifts and his time, how long do you think that large-minded, great-hearted man, who when a stripling with a shepherd's sling had gone out to meet Goliath, and smote the grisly terror of that land with a pebble from the brook, who had defended his father's sheep from the hungry lion and the paws of the bear, and subdued them with his shepherd's staff, — how long would he have been content to bear the seething thoughts of his own busy brain, the pent up throbbings of his own tumultuous heart? What but *action*, continued striving to accomplish something, daily conversance with men and things, the mastery of evil and the triumph over circumstances, could bring any satisfaction to so earnest and full a soul as his? What wings of a dove, white and downy as they might be, though moving on airs soft as Eastern moonlight, and scented with narcotic odors

from Arabian fields or the balsams of cedared Lebanon, could have taken David away from himself,—from his intellectual problems, his spiritual conflicts, his interior life of hopes and fears founded on the inalienable faculties of his own living soul? Within himself he carried the materials of his own disquietude; for of all the miseries which can assail a man of action the greatest is the custody of his own faculties, when suddenly banished from, or lifted out of, the arena of duty and service.

Many a soldier, to whom every day brought tedious marches, short rations, and mortal perils, and who had longed for years for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest in the security, plenty, and repose of his own village home, has already lived to prove that white-winged Peace which bore him to his mother's arms to be a condemnation to a sluggishness and monotony of life for which he would gladly resume the picket and the camp fare, the heavy musket, and the daily exposure to wounds, and sickness, and death. How many of our generals look at their swords, and feel that the rust of them is eating into their own hearts? Nay, who does not fear that, to ease that tedium, they may even speedily drag us into a new war? Who, that has sweated and groaned under the burdens of public life, has not found the release from them, which he honestly thought he desired, more intolerable than the cares and annoyances of political office? It is honorable to our nature that it covets and enjoys action and feels that it cannot resign,

while health and strength hold out, what presses, spurs, and commands its greatest exertions.

I have known a hundred men of business, full of cares and solicitudes, and fancying that these burdens and anxieties were their prison-house, take up David's sigh for dove's wings, straining forward to the day of jubilee, when they should escape the bondage of daily business, and become for the first time freemen. I have seen that day of jubilee come, and the worn and weary merchant, financier, or tradesman has quitted his calling and retired upon his envied fortune. Here and there, indeed, I have met some fortunate example of such a man, who to a happy temperament added the wisdom of knowing how to transfer his late interest in private business to labors of philanthropy, and who so escaped ennui, lethargy, and life-weariness, with all the bodily ailments that accompany a mind that is turned in upon itself, a brain that has no daily and necessary objects of thought and occupation. But for the majority the dove's wings that bore them away from business turned out to be raven's pinions, ominous and baleful, and the bird a pelican, picking at its own bleeding breast, not to feed its brood, but to satisfy its own craving for excitement that would not come. Better, in nine cases out of ten, for the man of business to bear all his cares than to flee from the providential sphere of his importance, his intercourse with his peers, his collision with the rivals of his hopes and aspirations. Far better lose his fortune than his health and his sanity; and both are

risked by abandoning customary cares and duties, scenes and companions. For one man driven mad by overwork, ten are crazed, and made melancholy to desperation, by want of employment for mind and time.

The truth is, my brethren, happiness, or self-satisfaction, or peace of mind, or enjoyment of life, or whatever name you choose to give to that frame of the feelings which makes a man a comfort to himself and a satisfaction to his family and friends, is not only a religious problem; it is a practical question deserving every man's attention and growing more important the older we grow. To be happy, continuously happy, even in this world, is a much harder and more uncertain undertaking than the young and those unacquainted with the capricious and curious nature they inherit are aware of. Those who assume, what many think so plain a proposition, that it is easier to be happy than it is to be good, are quite mistaken. Leaving religion and our obligations to our Maker and our future wholly aside, I say that a man setting out in this world solely to be happy, and devoting himself exclusively to that business, would find in strict proportion to his opportunities and the longer he pursued the object the immense costliness and labor involved in what seemed with favorable circumstances a simple task. This difficulty would usually be precisely proportioned to the facilities for the undertaking which observers might fancy the pursuer to enjoy. That is, the more materials the man had to start with,

the greater, more trying, more uncertain, would be the effort. The more leisure, the more means, the more rank, the less ease. Give him all the wealth he could ask and all it could purchase to start with, and you have at one blow struck from his possession all that longing, hoping, aspiring, which is the real spring and cheer of less fortunate hearts, and with it all those pleasures which in the pursuit prove so much more delightful than in the possession. Bestow the highest rank upon him, make him the heir of a crown, and you see him chasing a delusive pleasure from one weary place of amusement to another, or shooting at tame partridges and counting the number he destroys in a nobleman's preserve at a thousand in a week's shooting, with an amount of pleasure in the task which any farmer's boy in New Hampshire or Illinois outstrips in his rare half-holiday, as he pursues his shy game through untrodden plains or forests and brings his half-dozen quails or prairie-hens home to his proud mother's humble larder. Refine and educate with all appliances of schooling and art, and add these endowments to riches and leisure, and you create a fastidiousness and a craving for the ideal which compel many of the sons of rank and fortune to become weary wanderers in all foreign countries, seeking a new excitement in visiting the more inaccessible wonders of natural scenery or the less known triumphs of art, — sad, silent men, whom it breaks a happy and busy man's heart to see chasing the horizon as it flies with all the labor, but with

none of the zeal, with which the rustic child chases the gilded butterfly.

Who can look upon the women of leisure and fortune who follow each other in their gay vehicles in and out upon the main avenues of the world's capitals without a certain feeling of pity that so little enjoyment should be derived from so costly an ambition. Heaven forbid that any one should blame their efforts to enjoy themselves; but could they not manage to look just a little happier, a little more as if they did not envy the people going about their necessary business, the boys with their brown-paper bundles, the girls on their way to school with their books under their arms? And are not our young men of leisure, who stroll listlessly about the streets, with seemingly no object in life but to destroy "the enemy," — as they call that friend of the earnest and the useful, that precious instalment of eternity known as time, — really providentially employed by an all-wise providence to indirectly warn the rest of mankind, by their listless, saturnine, and weary faces, how wretched is a life of aimless, unoccupied, irresponsible, and self-indulgent ease? Ease, do we call it? No, there is no ease in it! The shoeblack or the woodsawyer, in fulfilling the laws of God more nearly, has an easier life than the men about town! Happiness is a blessing they flung behind them when they left the tasks of the schoolroom they thought they hated or the occasional pleasures which in the days before they had what they call independence they tasted with zest.

Until they meet with some disaster which drives them to honest and useful even though necessary occupation, there is no hope that one day of real happiness will dawn upon their often envied but truly pitiable lot.

My brethren, until we can find wings such as never yet sprouted or spread, — wings that will carry us away from our own nature, away from our own mental and moral constitution, away from the laws of the Creator written in our hearts, — we cannot gain anything in the nature of rest by merely flying from our circumstances, our providential lot, our appointed burdens and cares.

> "Me miserable! which way shall I fly? . . . .
> Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell."

We may change the place, but we shall keep the pain. If instead we could change our policy, that is, make amendments in our own habits, characters, and internal carriage, then indeed the whole prospect would be improved. The idler can escape his ennui, not by changing the scene of his idleness, but by ceasing to be an idler. The sensualist can escape the penalties of his debauchery, not by flying across seas, or from Saratoga to Ems or Homburg, or from water-cure to movement-cure, but by stopping his gluttony and license before they have ruined his constitution and his conscience. The man of business, involved in vast responsibilities, must moderate his ambition and his cupidity, not merely change his hours and his habits, if he would

sleep at night, or eat his dinner without producing nightmare and the horrors. Let him not vainly think he can find relief by abandoning his calling and retiring from his sphere; that will only be toppling over from one extreme to another, and he will be just as immoderate in his feelings as before, only they will be of a different kind. If he was lately driven by the demon of speculation and excessive enterprise, he will now be ridden by the demon of avarice, and will live with the poor-house in his dreams, and perhaps one day, in disgust of life, hang himself in his garret, or drown himself in his horse-pond.

We cannot escape the necessity of some stern self-discipline, if we would make ourselves safe and happy. Self-control, self-discipline, self-denial, self-purification, self-moderation, — if any man thinks his wealth, or position, or want of position, excuses him from these first conditions of human happiness, he is so far forth a fool. To govern the lips and the motions of the spirit that set the lips in action, to control the appetites carnal and spiritual, to regulate the thoughts, to smooth the temper and command the will, — these are indispensable; but not more so than the due use and play of the faculties of soul and sense which God has given us. Self-discipline and self-control are most pressing necessities of happiness; but just as pressing are activity, occupation, variety of thoughts and feelings, play and action of all parts of our nature, affections, intellect, conscience, will. People grow sour, dissatisfied, and life-weary oftener from inoccupation

and monotony of existence than from cares and labors. How often have I admired in the judicious few the wisdom which has invented occupations for themselves, to stave off the loneliness of retirement, the seclusion of age, the decay of the senses! Old people cannot be too busy in gentle ways; cannot too carefully keep in the currents of human interest, and bring about them objects of interest, their grandchildren, or objects of charity. Josiah Quincy told me that he visited John Adams at eighty-five, and found him reading one of Cicero's epistles. "Ah!" said Mr. Adams, as Mr. Quincy complimented him on his persistent studiousness, "an old man is like an old horse; to get anything out of him, you must work him all the time." Mr. Quincy told me in his ninetieth year that he still went regularly into his study and wrote for several hours every day.

It takes a deal of exercise to keep either the mind or the body in health; and without mental and physical health there can be neither real sanity nor real happiness. We must therefore all work for our living, be we rich or be we poor, be we young or be we old, — work mentally, morally, physically. Idleness means apathy, discontent, and in many cases madness and suicide. Want of honest and useful occupation means also vicious excitement, licentiousness, drunkenness, and crime, and it matters little what the class of life, nay, what the sex or age is. Man, and woman too, craves life, and life is action, feeling, variety. If they deny themselves useful action, they will commonly have

useless and vicious action; if without honest and safe excitements, they will have perilous and destructive excitements. One of the government examiners into the sources of revenue asked me the other day if I knew how rapidly opium, laudanum, and paregoric, in the form of various tinctures and soothing syrups, were creeping into domestic use, and destroying the health, the self-respect, and the whole prospects of thousands of all classes, high and low, men and women and children.

Of course I knew it, and have seen with horror the insidious approaches of such a destroying and seductive appetite. But what is the remedy? to indict the manufacturers of those public nuisances? or rather to call attention to the sources of the appetites they minister to, — the want of wholesome mental and moral stimulants, of interesting tastes, companions, and employments, of variety and charm of life? And yet people think it safe to sacrifice to fastidiousness the prospects of an occupied and a varied life. They will not marry until some ideal personage appears, and, waiting for him, lose the golden chance of enlarging life by affections, responsibilities, and interests which would crowd existence with variety and wholesome excitement. Cares and troubles are better and safer than emptiness, longing, and weariness. Faulty children and not quite perfect husbands and wives are better than none at all. To think ourselves independent of the great laws of human condition, wiser than He who made us, — that we can get

along upon our own private theory or caprice, and pick up happiness in our by-path, while the great providential highway is forsaken, — is an eccentricity which too many in our time pay bitterly and dearly for indulging.

Finally, brethren, there is no rest in anything but wholesome action; no peace in anything but systematic employment and use of all our powers in the service of our race, — which is the service of our God. This truth is avouched equally by common sense and observation, and by the precepts of our religion. The Gospel bids us redeem the time, employ our talents, exercise our affections, multiply our sympathies, and work ceaselessly in the vineyard of our Master. You have seen what earthly prudences teach and admonish us to do: and their testimony is the same with that of our Bibles. Our happiness must come from doing our duty; and our duty is to improve the time and the talents God has given us, with the utmost zeal, and to the greatest extent. It is this sentiment of religious duty which alone has power to calm and steady the mind and heart, while it keeps both earnest and busy in the work of life. Filling the post assigned to us, contending with the obstacles and troubles that lie in our appointed way, flying before no foes, and evading no obligations, — that is the road to heaven and the way of present peace. One of the happiest persons I ever knew, and one of the most intelligent, was a wife without children who spent twenty years in nursing a paralytic husband

and inventing means of assuaging his nervous paroxysms and depressed feelings. I believe the bright example of her cheerful devotion communicated courage and Christian faith and zeal to many hundreds of families who knew her well. I see that this same lady, under the frank title of "Recollections of Seventy Years," has just published a charming book, proving that she retains the industrious and active habits which allow no rust to settle upon the mind, even after that period has been reached when the Psalmist tells us that life is usually labor and sorrow. The great Philadelphia lawyer, John Sergeant, said that the most active, useful, laborious, and satisfactory part of his life lay between fifty-five and seventy. Ask for no wings to fly back to your irrecoverable youth in the flesh. You will find your only youth in the immortal life to which patient duty will carry you.

And as for the middle-aged, ask for no wings to fly from any duties or cares God has assigned you. Attack them in the front with zeal and patience, with courage and faith, and turn them into allies. Rejoice in the demands made on your gifts and talents. Do not think it necessary to leave your post, because it is monotonous, or lonely, or without opportunities. Employ your ingenuity in varying its monotony, in breaking up its unsatisfactoriness. Do not waste your time in longing for what is unattainable, but set yourself to work, and do what you can to secure and enjoy what is within your reach. You can each have a cultivated mind, a

well-regulated heart, an obedient will. You can all have books, and you can acquire various accomplishments. You can use your eyes and ears, and hands and feet. I see not how anybody can lack for employment in a community like this. You may have to invent some new way, or to meet some peculiar obstacles; but what are a man's or woman's mind and character for, but to circumvent difficulties and discover and employ some few original methods? Anything but vain longings for dove's wings will do. The rest the heart and soul want is in God, — full faith in the Father, the Friend, the Inspirer and the Author of our nature and our lot. And no dove can carry us nearer to Him than we already are, when we humbly, submissively, and patiently do his will. Nay, let rather His dove come to us, — that Holy Spirit which is God's love and truth and will, welcomed and found and felt in our docile, trusting hearts, — and then that rest which visits the soul that is earnest in the Father's business will establish itself here and now, even in the midst of the most painful and trying circumstances; and we shall want no wings to carry us away, for the dove's wings will be folded in a nest which God makes full of peace and quietness for us, and for Himself and his Son, in the bottom of every patient, faithful, and active Christian's heart!

IX.

HEREDITARY FAITH AND PIETY.

I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

2 TIMOTHY i. 5.

THE text recognizes, in a way that must touch all hearts fortunate enough to recall the devout example and religious instruction received from reverent parents and grandparents, the law of hereditary faith and piety. It has been said that most people remain of the doctrinal views and religious type of the class or sect among whom they pass their fourteenth and fifteenth years. When we first begin to think for ourselves, the question of religious faith usually comes in as among the earliest to be decided, and as our habitual respect for our elders and the force of fresh affections is then peculiarly operative, we naturally settle into the views of those who surround us, and to whom we are most attached. And who have such natural claims on our respect and following as our parents and elder relatives? If to natural and domestic affections they add a sincere worth and a vital piety, a respect for religion and a warm interest in its sacred

usages and customs, with well-defined and serious convictions of Christian truth in any one of its systematized forms, how potent are their opinions, their example, and their sacred prepossessions, over the minds and hearts of those in the plastic and forming condition of youth! Nothing can take the place of this domestic and providential training. Those who, like young Timothy, are happy enough to have had a mother Eunice and a grandmother Lois, religious ancestors who possessed an unfeigned faith, can never sufficiently thank God for the blessing which directed their young feet into the path of a natural yet hereditary piety. They saw their parents and grandparents revering the name of God above all names; using and tenderly respecting the Scriptures; kneeling in household prayer, referring all events gratefully or submissively to an Infinite Providence; bearing sorrows and cares with pious cheerfulness; moderating their appetites and passions with the steadfast sense of an end beyond the present. They heard Christ's name ever spoken with a holy hush of tender reverence and gratitude. They recall the patience of the last illness, the serene calm of the dying pillow, where they bade farewell to the beloved ones, who left the mantle of their faith and piety as they ascended.

How little the peculiar views of such revered friends as these have to do with limiting the influence of their faith and opinions! They may have been Calvinists, Churchmen, Methodists, Unitarians, and from an intellectual point of view there is a

great choice in their differing views; but if they had faith and piety enough warmly and sincerely to love any views and usages as Christian, and because Christian; to lay the stress of their affections upon them, and shape their lives and characters by them; to strive, by their inculcation and their example, to bring their children up in them, — they were practically much the same in their influence, their shaping and saving power. It is not the dogmatic views, nor even the good sense and wisdom of the particular forms and usages, of any sect or household, that decide its religious tone and influence over the young, or indeed over society. It is the religious faith and spirit, the reverent temper, the importance attached to religious duties, and the time and dignity allotted to the subject, that really carry the weight and decide the influence of any home. Where religion in any form, or under any views, is at the heart of parents; where they themselves are obviously and habitually under its power; where God is unaffectedly the supreme object of love and service, and a steady solicitude is known to exist to do his will, enjoy his favor, and communicate his service to all under its sway, — be sure that no opinions consistent with this temper will prove any barrier to a wholesome and saving influence; none are so stiffly irrational that they will not melt into reason in the fires of sincere piety; none are so rigidly rational that they will not kindle into piety in the glow of a reverent yearning toward the Source of all love.

The question, then, for a religious household, is not first and foremost, What opinions shall we adopt? what sect shall we join? what form of worship adopt? Indeed, it is a great misfortune when this question is left open, and usually it is open only in those who have grown up in religious neglect. Dr. Johnson said, "The man that is of no sect is apt to be of no religion"; and what he doubtless meant was this: the man brought up in a family whose religious life was so cold, dead, or absent that it did not prepossess and commit him to the faith and usages of his parents and kindred, was so unfortunate in his experience at the very period when the religious feelings and faith are forming, that he is likely to be a wanderer, a doubter, and a worldling all his days after. Who can readily believe that the faith and religious connections of a sainted mother are not the best for her child? How idle and weak are the scruples which beset many parents, in our time, about the kind of faith and piety they shall bring their children up in? Such a reverence do they profess for their children's liberty and rights of opinion, that they will not commit them to anything definite and tangible in faith or custom, however much they may believe it themselves, for fear of prejudicing their minds and preventing them from forming their own opinions in the ripeness of their judgment. As if theological opinions were more important than the religious habits of mind, and heart, and life, which can only be formed in connection with some provisional opinions. Opin-

ions in religion are only the slats and trellises upon which the religious habits and affections are trained. These slats may be made of pine or oak, of wood liable to rot or fitted to last; but the vine cannot wait for what is absolutely best in the trellis; the slats can always be renewed or replaced, but the spring will not tarry and the vine will bear no fruit if it is not early lifted from the ground. Give your children your own opinions, if you have any, fearlessly and freely, unless they are such views as give you no comfort and peace, and produce no fruits of righteousness in your own heart. Indeed, the question is not likely to come up in minds and hearts that have any definite views, or possess any religious faith. It is chiefly people who, for want of proper parental instruction, were left to pick up a random faith in the accidental intercourse of their after life and so have no deep and settled religious views or feelings themselves, that are disposed, from sheer lack of positive convictions, to fling their children upon the same precarious chances, under the plea of respecting their liberty.

There is no fashionable error more common than the cant of independence in religious opinions. Nothing is so rare, and nothing can be more precious when it is genuine. But if there be anything which requires for its existence a combination of the finest powers of thought, united with the greatest tenderness of conscience and the most active sensibilities of the religious faculty, it is that extraordinary and exceptional person, — a man who

deliberately originates and fashions by independent study and meditation his own faith. Almighty God, in his gracious providence, has happily not left the mass of his children to the unequal chances of such an independence. Real original thinking on any subject is the privilege of the smallest possible class of minds. Each generation is fortunate if it possess *one* such mind. Columbus discovered America; but he did not leave it to all his successors to go in search of a new world to live in. The names of those who have originated new systems of opinion in science, philosophy, art, religion, may be told on the ten fingers. The sects and denominations, happily growing fewer and fewer in a country whose crude and ignorant thinking had produced so many, are already proofs how little value there is in those conceited and stubborn people, who find nothing to respect outside their own whims, and who, like some people who make themselves ridiculous by the equal originality and bad taste of their dress, must have a brand-new theological costume to fit their eccentric consciences or peculiarly shaped minds. A great, original thinker in religion, in science, in philosophy, in government, is a mighty product, the resultant of splendid forces brought into the rarest conjunction. The most of us show our wisdom chiefly in the skill with which we choose among these teachers and instinctively perceive their right to our deference.

But it is not individual men, founders, leaders, who finally shape those views that by their balance

and wisdom become prevalent, and form, at any particular era, the schools of opinion in politics, religion, manners, and education, among which we have to choose our own position, or, perhaps still more fortunately, have it settled for us by parental and social sympathy. No form of religious faith is the work of any one mind; no sect is the product of one man's will. If it live, it is because it is adapted to live, by suitableness to the intellectual and moral soil in which it is planted and by the wholesomeness of the fruit it brings forth. If it is not absolutely true, it is true relatively to the wants and needs of its adherents. We have to take up our religious views, as we take up our political views, or our social views, — depending on the wisdom of our sect, or party, or school. They may not be infallible, but they are usually wiser than we are, because considerable bodies cannot unite in what does not represent common sense, common experience, and common wants.

Let, then, every Christian denomination that has a history reflect that it represents certain foregone necessities, experiences, intuitions, which gradually hewed it into its present shape, or fenced it within certain boundaries, and made it to differ, for the general good, from others; and consider that the duty allotted to it is to cultivate its own ground, and press its own convictions, and bring forth its own type of Christian character. For instance, it is a great mistake to think that there is not a useful and beautiful type of Christian thinking and feeling

among genuine and devout Roman Catholics, in which symbolic and ecclesiastical faith are ripened into the most tender and affecting piety. Let that type grow; only do not permit it to overshadow and pluck up other types, or flourish exclusively at the public cost. So the Methodist Church, with its emotional fervor, has foundations in human nature and a use in this new country which ought to make us grateful for its power and spread. It is a true type of the Christian religion, which perpetuates the pentecostal time and the revivals which added three thousand in a day to the Church. So the Episcopal Church, with its dignity and formality, its liturgy, its sacramental rites and orders, has the odor and use of three centuries of grateful service to commend it, and has a wonderful adaptation to the lovers of order and decorum, and to the reverers of the priestly office in a country so much wanting in antiquity and authority.

But while these and many others are all true and necessary types, our Unitarian type is just as true and just as necessary. It came from no wilfulness or caprice; not by the will of man, but by the will of God. It has been illustrated by the learning, the independent thinking, of minds like Milton, Newton, and Locke, and by the saintly lives of such celestial souls as Channing and Ware. It has a recognized place of the highest intellectual and moral dignity in England, where Priestley, and Lindsey, and Price, and Carpenter, and Martineau, have illustrated it. The State of Massachusetts,

first among moral and spiritual communities on the face of the earth, owes much to its guidance and is largely the fruit of its seed, while it wears upon its uplifted and commanding finger the noble, thoughtful, philanthropic, educated, and free city of Boston as its signet ring. There is no need to deny or disparage other sects, or other views, in order to prefer, to honor, to trust in, our own. We do not affirm that we have *all* the truth, wisdom, love, humanity, piety, of the world and the nation in our church. Nay, we do not deny that we see much in other churches we should like to copy and graft into our own stock. We say only, this is *our* faith and *our* church. We inherited it from our mother Eunice and our grandmother Lois. We know what characters and lives it has produced. Objectors may say what they please about it, — denounce it as unchristian, imperfect, cold, not according to their creeds. Do you easily persuade cautious and happy people to leave their homes in a climate which has some defects, to settle in a strange region, where the snows are never deep and the spring never tardy? and if they go, as some have gone, into the tropics, far south or west, have you commonly found them as contented as they were in their original home? Did they discover no defects in the new climate, and no trials there that no climate, however good, can remedy?

I say, then, to you, just what I should say to any other denomination if I had been born and bred in it, Honor your mother! You budded on this branch

of the common root; see to it how much fruit you can bear on this very branch in honor of the common stock. Don't be curiously questioning whether there is sap enough in this branch to nourish you and your children. There certainly will *not* be, if you stop the circulation. If, instead of growing and keeping green and succulent, you are trying to bend away and run all to twigs and parasitic wood, you will certainly not help your branch to do itself and the Church of Christ, which is the root, the honor they deserve. And what you do by your love, devotion, and service to build up your Unitarian faith in a community like this — by assiduous attendance on its worship, by an active interest in and generous support of its charities, by careful study of its literature, by domestic use of its books of devotion, by special fidelity to its opinions, understanding what its accepted leaders have written, defending it intelligently when attacked, professing it where it is not popular, glorying in it when it becomes a cross, and especially by exemplifying its pure and practical morality in your business and your daily lives — will not fail to win for it the love and reverence, even if it does not secure the following, of many of other theological prepossessions.

But, above all, do not hesitate, do not delay, do not neglect to bring up your children without the least misgiving or the least waiting, and with the most careful and painstaking methods, in the opinions, usages, and affections of the faith you yourselves profess. If you do not know what that is, it is because

your parents failed to do just what you are failing to do; and with what injustice and folly to you, I beg of you to consider and not commit over again. Do you tell me that the Unitarian faith has nothing definite, fixed, settled, which you can put your finger upon and teach your children? I reply, that as it is the only faith in Christendom that claims to be in perfect accord with reason, which is its noble reproach; that makes true goodness and true religion identical; that places morality and piety on the same level, and allows the first to be the only test of the last; that positively fixes Christ's place as that of a derived and dependent Son of God; so it is the only faith which is really capable of definition and positive statement in terms of reason. I do not deny that the Nicene Creed, for instance, is definite in form, but I deny that it contains any definite ideas, or that its ideas in proportion to their definiteness are not obviously contradictory and absurd.

I say that we have a faith which, if not contained in an authoritative creed, is none the less the most definite faith now in Christendom, — the one in which its disciples are most truly agreed, because their agreement is not a forced and unreal one preserved by the authority of a creed, but a voluntary and actual one based on the love of a family. If we are real Unitarians we know what we believe very truly, and we know that it has made us wise unto salvation and is able to save our children, if we teach it unto them by precept and example. Do not

think you can allow your children to wander here and there, — to stay away from the Sunday school and the Bible class, or from church, — to think what they please, and do what they please, and follow every caprice of taste or social attraction that sways their giddy heads, — without great wrong to yourselves and them. You are bound to bring them up in the deepest reverence for religious institutions, and in the most careful observance of the usages and methods of the church you have united yourselves with and which represents your Christian faith and allegiance. If there are any hopes — and to me they are very full and glowing — for the future of our church, they lie in the care to be taken of the religious education of the children. Have any of you neglected it and not seen already the fruits of your preoccupation, your own imperfect interest, your own want of clear convictions in matters of religion, which proper attention to the subject would have given you? It is not too late for many of you to repair your error. Do not think the church will educate religious children, when the home pulls the other way, or that any influence can take the place of that of pious parents. And do not imagine that you yourselves can do without faith and piety any better than your children. If I had faith and piety only to teach it, it would be worthless. How much I need it, God knows and I partly know, — and yet it is my business. What then will serve you in your preoccupations, cares, and pleasures, but special attention to your religious views, feel-

ings, and duties at home? Become intelligent, hearty, thoughtful Unitarian Christians yourselves, and your children will be sure to have your religious nurture, Christian care, and example, and church and home will work together to one glorious and sure result, in their hereditary faith and piety.

X.

JOSIAH, KING OF JUDAH.

A SERMON FOR YOUNG MEN.

And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

2 KINGS xxiii. 25.

IF you will turn to your Bible and read the twenty-second, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth chapters of the Second Book of Kings, or the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth chapters of the Second Book of Chronicles, in connection with the first twelve chapters of the Book of Jeremiah, who describes the general low conduct of the Jewish people at that era, you will find the history of the young king Josiah, of whom the exalted eulogy in the words of the text was written. Josiah, son of Amon and Jedidah, succeeded his father in the eighth year of his age, B. C. 641, and reigned thirty-one years. In the sixteenth year of his age, and in a very corrupt time, when the knowledge and service of God had been grossly neglected and abandoned through the worldliness of his predecessors on the throne, Josiah awoke to a keen and overwhelming sense of his obli-

gations to the religion of David and Moses. The books of the law had been lost or forgotten, but found by Hilkiah the priest, in the course of some repairs which Josiah had ordered in the temple, hid away in an unused part of the building. This added new fuel to the flame already kindled in Josiah's devout and sensitive heart; he read the warnings and threatenings of the law with a shuddering soul.

Moved to undertake a general reform in religion, in a personal progress through his whole dominions continued for six years he led a complete and successful crusade against idolatry in all its forms. He destroyed all the groves, altars, and high places where false gods and idols were worshipped, restored religious instruction among the people by recalling the Levites to their neglected duty, and caused the sinfulness and peril of apathy, ignorance, and irregularity in things pertaining to worship and obedience to the law to be made everywhere known. For generations a moral and spiritual acquaintance with the precepts of the religion of Moses had been suffered to decline, until it had sunk into almost utter neglect. The sacred books had virtually disappeared. It was as if the abuses of the Roman priesthood had so succeeded in driving the knowledge of the Scriptures out of the States of the Church, that the very existence of the Bible had been forgotten by its people. Many Papists in our own day have never had a copy of the Scriptures in their hands, and if the Roman ecclesiastics had their way, the time might come when the very

existence of the Bible would be made a secret. At any rate, idolatries similar to the worship of the relics of saints or of the Madonna, with the substitution of forms of men's device for the appointed service, had so driven out in Josiah's childhood the worship and knowledge of the true God and even acquaintance with the sacred books, that Hilkiah found them only as we might perchance find the lost books of Livy or the Sibylline leaves, walled up in some Roman ruin; and they were read almost as a new and fresh revelation of God's will both by Josiah and the people of Judah.

I will not speak of the blessedness of that people whose king is by providential ordination the best and holiest soul among them all. What it is to have vice, sensuality, and folly enthroned in imperial power and place we all too sadly know from the common history of our race. The purple of kings has usually called forth only a blush from the people's hearts, the natural reflection of its pampered selfishness and bloated sensuality. The crown has needed all its external diamonds and rubies to hide the poverty of the head that wore it; the ermine has covered a spirit spotted like itself, yet without its whiteness. We have instinctively felt, in the experience of our own moral weakness in the midst of seducing temptations and corrupting luxury, what superhuman force and moral lustre must belong to the soul of that monarch, king or queen, who, ignorant of wants or unappeased desires, flattered by the other sex, fawned on by courtiers,

lapped in costly appliances and tempted with insidious pleasures, could yet maintain moral elevation. When monarchs like David, Josiah, Marcus Antoninus, Alfred, or Louis appear, the human race hastens to canonize them as saints, to attribute some direct and special inspiration to their characters, and to exalt them as persons far above their place as kings. It is a confession of the general feeling how unfavorable exceptional power, unbounded wealth, and external luxury are to piety and virtue, and it ought to teach us that God does not often make his favorites monarchs, does not regard the rich and the great as objects of his partiality, but only as necessary instruments for the management of organized society.

But there was another peculiarity about Josiah's piety, purity, and zeal for religion, which especially draws my attention to his example at this time. It was this: that it began in his sixteenth year and attained its highest manifestation in his twenty-sixth, when his reign may be said to have culminated in the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, observed with more munificent offerings, better arranged services, and a larger concourse of worshippers than had been seen on any previous occasion. At this feast Josiah entered into a special covenant with all his people to keep the law of the Lord, and as the fruit of it idolatry, superstition, and vice disappeared to an extraordinary extent from all the land. True, he died before his fortieth year, and by an arrow from the enemy in the field of battle,

but he died in the cause of patriotism and honor, and Jeremiah wrote his dirge, now lost to us, while the whole nation, embalming him in their tears, handed down his memory to our own days. "Like unto him was there no king before him, ... neither after him arose there any like him."

From sixteen to twenty-six appears to have been the period in which Josiah's zeal for virtue and piety was most conspicuous. This was the time of his tenderest sensibility to the law of God, of his most devoted earnestness in destroying the altars of idolatry and the strongholds of vice; of his finest sense of the claims of his pious predecessors. He burned and stamped into powder the groves where idols had been worshipped, and scattered their ashes upon the graves of the people whose souls they had deceived and corrupted. The houses of infamy, where women worked their toils for men with one hand and their embroideries for idols with the other, he broke wholly down. He spared not the wicked altar which the governor of the city had sheltered under his privileged station, and that fearful valley of Hinnom, that Tophet, or visible hell, where Moloch drew the corrupt and conscience-smitten hearts of parents to propitiate his imaginary wrath by the sacrifice of their own children in the flames, he defiled so completely that no man dared enter it, and these fiery cruelties ceased. The false Jeroboam and his memory he cursed, and the sepulchres and altars of his deceived allies, with the very bones of the prophet and his

followers, he ground to powder. But one sepulchre he carefully spared, — the sepulchre of the man of God who came from Nebo and proclaimed in advance the very judgments which Josiah now executed against sin and idolatry. "Let him alone, let no man move his bones," he said. But the priests, the wizards and sorcerers, with all their images, tools, and deceptions, he slew, or burnt, or pounded in mortars, and scattered their dust to the winds. All this was done between the sixteenth and the twenty-sixth year of the young king.

These ten years seem to be the decade when human beings are at the most passionate, eager, and sensitive period of their existence; when love and hope, enterprise and courage, sensibility and zeal, are at their whitest heat and in their most malleable condition; when the body and the soul are in the liveliest and most sympathetic union, — the blood, young and rich, flowing in its fullest stream to the brain from the strongest pulses of the heart; when the world has its freshest beauty, imagination its wildest fancies, sympathy its most easy and unchecked flow; when doubts and disappointments have not chastened the ardor of inexperience, or taught human aspiration and enterprise their mortal limits; when the senses, unsated and still full of yearning and quest, are the inlets of the keenest pleasure and the sharpest pain; when all things seem possible and obstacles and enemies only challenge an increased energy and an irresistible determination.

It is during this period then, from sixteen to twenty-six, that the passions and powers of human nature lend themselves with greatest affluence and effect either to the good or evil choice of the will; that the mighty wings of the emotions dash the soul with most destructive violence upon forbidden quarries, deceptive and crushing goals, or lift it towards lawful and glorious aims and destinies,—like the eager moth rushing into the flame, or the joyous lark mounting towards the sun. The conquerors of the world have dated their ambition and their victories from this decade; poets have founded or achieved their fame, philosophers and seers made their pregnant guesses, and, slowly following the intuitive hints of their inspired youth, have only proved and matured, in all that remained of life, the sharp insight of their first passionate glimpses of truth. From this period of life, too, religion has drawn its most vigorous and heroic recruits; the burning lips of young men have spoken most rapturous and convincing arguments for self-devotion and consecration to God and duty. When Moses slew the Egyptian and fled to his great mission, when Samuel heard the voice of the Lord and cried, "Here am I," when David smote Goliath with his shepherd's sling, when Jesus taught the elders in the temple, youth lent its courage and passion to divine inspiration; and youth, full of sensibility, hope, and aspiration, has ever since supplied faith and religion with their chief susceptibilities and their most potent instruments. Should

we take from the Church of Christ all those whose awakening to the beauty of holiness and the attractions of the Saviour's character and promises was associated with the first ardors of their opening minds, — the idealism of early manhood and maidenhood, when God and goodness, passion for beauty and passion for virtue, love for woman and love for Christ, seemed almost twin emotions, — we should leave the tree of life stripped of its largest and finest fruits, the after-ripening of these early blossoms. When is piety so contagious, faith so easy and natural, hope and charity so favored by physical elasticity and bodily sympathy, when does nature seem so like the garment of God, when do stars and flowers and streams speak so supernatural a language, as in the period when the heart first becomes conscious of itself, feels the sweet pain of longing to be loved, and pants and struggles to give itself away in uncalculating prodigality? If, then, the beauty of God's holiness, the glory of Christ's sacrifice, the heroism of duty, the sanctity of self-consecration, come before the young heart yet unpledged to the false charms of selfish pleasures and immediate delights, — if only the ardors, aspirations, and sympathies of this abounding season of youth can be fastened upon those permanent and eternal objects that remain forever beautiful, young, and satisfying, — if God, the supreme loveliness, if Christ, the perfection of beauty, if immortality, the eternal youth, if duty, the unsetting star, if virtue, the gold that never rusteth nor is stolen or

lost, if self-consecration, the bridal veil that time cannot stain nor moth devour,—if devotion to self-improvement, the science of humanity, the imitation of Christ and the honor and glory of God,—if these can be so set before the passionate and teeming heart of young manhood and maidenhood that its luxuriant tendrils can once fairly fasten on so divine a trellis, what plants that the Father hath planted shall ever so adorn the garden of God?

But, alas! what is so true of piety and godliness, virtue and moral heroism, is just as true — must we not say, still truer? — of impiety and ungodliness, of vice and moral declension. For one royal Josiah, how many royal Ahazes and Jezebels have turned the fire of their youth into the ruin of public virtue, and squandered their ardor and susceptibility upon the meanest and most degrading objects! The public prints are soiled to-day with the scandalous revelations which have made the princes of royal houses the cause of open reproach. But would it were only kings and princes that squander their youth in idleness and guilty pleasure! Would that it were not the anxious problem of all fathers and mothers, as their sons come to their earliest beard, how to protect them from themselves, from the heat of their blood, the eagerness of their love for pleasure, the rebellion of self-will, the contempt of authority, the headlong rush of their passions into vice and folly! Would that youth knew how sacred and glorious a power it possesses in its elasticity and ardor, its enthusiasm and sensibility to beauty,

its generosity and glow of feeling! Would it then turn its strength, so soon to diminish, into the channels on which none of God's mills are built? Would it waste the sacred current of its power in destroying society and itself? Would it fasten infinite yearnings upon mean and perishing objects? Should that passion that is meant to wing it for heaven be suffered to drag it down to hell? What is the very love that so early gives young souls their first glimpse within the gates of paradise, but a sacred hint and impulse that says to the soul, There is that which can keep thee under an endless thrill of blissful joy and happiness? But O what emptiness, and loathing, and misery come, when the senses, breaking loose from the soul, take the divine power of passion and burn it out in the short-lived service of carnal indulgence, melting the golden key of life into the fee of a week's wild orgy, selling their birthright for a mess of pottage!

M. Quetelet, the great French statistician and student of social science, in a recent work on Social Physics, says that "the result of a recent statistical examination, carefully conducted, in France, Belgium, and England, shows that up to adult age the proclivity to crime and vice increases very rapidly, and obtains its maximum for men in France at about twenty-four years of age, in Belgium a little later, in England a little earlier. In France the maximum arrives a year later for women, and is only one fourth as strong. The principal crimes

attain the maximum of attracting force in the following order: theft, rape, assault with violence, murder, manslaughter, poisoning, and frauds of all sorts."

Here, then, between sixteen and twenty-six is the decade of violence, crime, and vice. Within these limits lies the fatal field where human nature oftenest eats the dust and spills uselessly and hurtfully its most vigorous blood. Just here comes the deadly struggle. Here erect themselves the fiercest and most unrestrainable passions and appetites; here inexperience and hungry desires are joined; here the judgment is weakest and the inclinations are most powerful. Here hope and confidence are boldest and conscience least active and authoritative. Here the rein of parental government is loosed and liberty comes to its first estate. Here advice, counsel, warning, are most jealously eyed or most rudely spurned and wisdom and experience regarded with least respect. Over children under our own roofs we may hope to throw moral protection and religious influence; about our daughters, longer at home, we may expect, aided by their sex and the wholesome prejudices of society, to fling some restraints and offer a protection that shall last them until they pass into homes of their own and come to duties that swiftly sober their lives. But for young men, reaching their independence, separated from their homes, aspiring to all the privileges of manhood, what hope have we but in their own awakened sense of the perils of their nature, —

in calling their attention, by every means within reach of morality and religion, to their critical season of life, appealing to their own manhood to arm itself against itself, piercing their ears with cries that shall reach to the passions below the passions, to the nobler thirsts and capacities of their hearts, deeper down than the clamorous appetites and proclivities of their senses and their blood? It is not reading-rooms and bowling-alleys, nor concerts and tableaux, that can snatch the ardent passions and violent desires of youth from the furnace they front and mistake for the gate of heaven. No, they must glow in the heat of nobler passions, they must see the light of heavenly truth, they must feel the attractions of self-denial and self-control, the glory of purity, the blessedness of holy aspiration, the might and manhood of a guarded and watchful virtue, they must be penetrated with moral and spiritual life, before the finest and most promising and capable of them can be saved from their threatening fate and made children of God and kings and priests in the realm of their own souls.

Would that those in this assembly who have grown old in virtue and piety could stand up here and tell the young men what guarded them from downfall and ruin in the passionate and perilous decade of life! Love and gratitude towards the parents that nursed and protected their childhood; a secret mighty resolve not to break their mother's heart with shame and disappointment; an inward self-reverence that kept saying to itself in the most

tempting hours, What pleasures or follies that vice and self-indulgence offer can ever pay me for the loss of this holy self-respect? and stronger still, perhaps, a haunting sense of God, — not clear, defined, nor conscious of itself, — but something that looked from stars, and breathed in flowers, and gleamed in brooks, and shone in the eyes of certain persons set apart, in the looks of babes and children and pure women and holy men, and kept saying, "Rescue thyself, O young and longing and greedy heart, rescue thyself, young man, for me! for the pure and divine pleasures of Him who made thee to share his sorrows and his joys, who calls thee his child and woos thee by the voice of nature, love, poetry, and religion to dwell amid this beauty, grandeur, and sanctity of nature in a way worthy of him whom the Creator has made its lord!"

Look, O young men, upon the manhood of that Jesus who was never more than a young man himself, — dying at thirty-one or thirty-two, — and think what his magnanimity, purity, enthusiasm, and faith have done to exalt and purify society and humanity! I have spoken unto you, young men, because you are strong in passion, appetite, energy, aspiration, full of health and vigor. If Christ is to conquer in our day and over our perils, trials, and temptations, it must be by the power of men younger than he was at his cross. The young men from sixteen to twenty-six must be our Josiahs, and, purifying themselves, must purge the land of its idols, wizards, and sirens, its groves of sodomy, its

abominations of sin. You must reign kings and princes, young men, and it is for you to say what the city and the nation shall be, — violent, greedy, corrupt, given to pleasure, shame, and all unrighteousness, or sober, chaste, devoted to purity, ambitious of the public good, energetic in usefulness, and ardent, passionate, and zealous only in the service of God, Christ, and humanity!

XI.

JACOB'S WRESTLE WITH GOD.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

GENESIS xxxii. 24.

THE middle portion of the Book of Genesis is taken up chiefly with the history of the patriarch Jacob. He was born when Isaac, his father, was fifty-nine years old, and was the favorite son of his mother; a quiet, domestic youth, but with a cunning and even a treachery in his character that nothing but the times he lived in can excuse. He bought the birthright from his careless brother Esau, and by deceit won from his father the blessing which belonged to his brother. He continued at home and unmarried until the middle of his life, and then, to escape his brother's well-deserved jealousy, went into Padan-Aram to seek a wife among his kindred. On his way through Bethel God appeared to him in the singular form recorded in the text. From that time his life and character seemed wonderfully changed. Passing through great emergencies, — the angry pursuit of Laban, the vengeance of the Canaanites provoked by the

murder of Shechem, the hatred of Esau,—he bore himself so bravely and trustingly that he won the love and reverence of his children and of his own and all succeeding generations. Called at first "the Supplanter," the meaning of his name Jacob, he was thenceforth called Israel, or "the soldier of God."

I do not propose to analyze or excuse the early character of Jacob. He was a self-seeking, sharp, and tricky person all the first half of his life, though gentle, winning, and domestic. He kept a steady eye to the main chance, laid his plans with patient cunning, and had a secret complacent feeling that he was somehow a predestined favorite of God. His was a character we none of us like,—calculating, sly, externally amiable, long-headed, and generally, in the worldly sense of the word, "successful," but withal sanctimonious and self-complacent. Yet it is not an uncommon character. Indeed, gentleness of manners and the absence of violent feelings go not infrequently with the prudent and money-getting spirit. For "prosperity is consistent with intense worldliness, intense selfishness, intense hardness of heart." Jacob was merely shrewd and perfectly self-controlled, selfish and "successful." He met violence with mother wit and smothered opposition in a yielding but victorious softness. He was too prudent even to marry till long after middle life. A selfish bachelor, without anything to care for but his growing wealth, he was kept up to respectability by reverence for his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham, whom he meant not to disgrace,

and whose blood he felt made him dear to their God and his. And all this went on until he was really getting to be an old man, — if the patriarchal chronology has any analogy with our own. He was seventy-eight when he experienced the change of which I am now going to speak, and lived to nearly double that age.

Jacob was now in a great strait. He had married and had children, — eleven sons; had grown rich, and was driving his cattle back from his voluntary exile to his own country in peaceful triumph, when lo! Esau appeared with four hundred armed men, — Esau, the violent and self-reliant hunter, the man in all the world he had most reason to fear and dread, — for how had he not wronged him! Esau appears to dispute his way, and to slay him and his wives and children in the midst of all his wealth. Jacob does not forget his cunning and his tact even now. He sends large droves of goats and sheep and camels and horses forward as presents to propitiate his brother; but he knows that all this is not yet enough. There is a fearful sense of reckoning in his heart. He is self-condemned in the midst of his thrift and his success. He knows that he has no real claim on the protection of God, and perhaps for the first time in his life he is impelled to cast himself wholly upon God's forgiveness, to confess his selfishness, and to implore divine guidance and protection. So he sends his wives and children and all that he has over the brook, and puts them at the mercy of Esau, while he himself

remains behind, alone of all his host, to meditate upon his own position and character. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

What that fearful wrestle of God with Jacob, or Jacob with God, was, it is not very difficult to imagine, in spite of the pictorial form in which the conflict and its results are described in the record. Jacob up to this time had not half believed in God or godliness. His policy and faith were, "Be as honest as circumstances allow and as is consistent with the personal ends you seek. Do not disgrace your lineage, and always remember you belong to and represent a most respectable family. Get riches, get power, get honor, by every means you can safely employ." He had tried that policy during a long life, and thus far it had worked well, and all the rich fruits of it were now in his hand. But here, just over this brook of Jabbok, was God's agent waiting to settle with him! There were his wives and children, his servants and flocks, all he had; and when they had passed over that brook they were really no longer his, but Esau's, — fully in his power and at his mercy. God seemed just ready to take away from Jacob everything for which he had toiled and plotted and slaved. He felt the justice of his retribution, he saw the emptiness and hollowness of the goal for which he had striven, the utter barrenness of the position he had won, and it drove his soul, as it has ten thousand others, into close quarters with the Being who alone searches

and knows the heart and judges the life and character. What is it all worth? must have been the agonizing cry of his soul, as it has been of hundreds just like him, as they see danger and death swooping down upon their idols of wealth and reputation, position and place, and find that there is nothing they can carry with them, — nothing of it all that appertains to their real self, — nothing that has or ought to have the least claim on the favor of the Almighty Truth and Goodness. It was the thought of his own emptiness and worthlessness, after all that he had gained by cunning and treachery, by sharpness of wit and patient plodding at his own fortunes, which now wrestled with Jacob and held him all night in a fearful embrace, as he hesitated and struggled with his cupidity and his worldliness, his selfish calculation and dependence on his own address on the one hand, the thought of a righteous and holy God, the despiser of meanness and self-seeking, the friend of justice, truth, and disinterestedness, on the other, — the God of his noble ancestor, the father of the faithful, the God-fearing and God-trusting Abraham, and the God of the sincere and tender-hearted Isaac, his own father.

Doubtless many a time before God had wrestled with him, as he compared himself with them and listened with a half-shut ear to the reproaches of his own conscience; but hitherto he had evaded his gracious assailant and come off wounded indeed, but without yielding to the divine challenger of his selfish life and character. But now peril and ven-

geance lay over the brook, ready to sweep his wives and children and all he possessed out of his hands! Esau, a brother defrauded and wronged, and turned into the most fearful of foes, — for what so sour and poisonous as love turned to hatred, the milk of the same mother curdled into gall? — Esau was to be met and his long account of injuries and alienation to be settled with, and Jacob knew in his heart that God could have no sympathy with such a "supplanter" as he had proved, that there was no escape but in confessing all to his Maker, seeing himself just as he was, and, repenting of his selfishness and worldliness, throwing himself on the Divine mercy and forgiveness! O, it was hard indeed for this prosperous self-seeker to acknowledge the utter failure of his scheming brain, and to own that all these bands of followers, and all this wealth of cattle, which made him a prince in the eyes of the world, were nothing to God, and nothing in the way of substitutes for righteous aims and unselfish feelings, — nothing that could bear examination in the hour of serious trial, or deliver him from a sense of the righteous doom, the fearful retribution, which lay over the brook he must now cross!

There are three things to be noticed for our instruction in the text and in the story I have related. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

1. "And Jacob was left *alone*." He had sent his wives and his children, his flocks and herds, over the brook, out of his sight, and he had done it that

he might uninterruptedly meditate on his own condition and character. How important it is that we should sometimes separate ourselves from all we lean on, — from our worldly pursuits and possessions, our kindred and companions, our public importance and the delusive support and countenance of those flatterers who live upon our substance, — and in solitary and naked meditation reflect upon our real selves! How artificial, temporary, unsubstantial, is all this external importance and public consequence! How little have the praises and flatteries of those about us to do with our inward worth and peace and self-respect! How short the duration of our fortunes, how slippery our hold upon our possessions! What is lasting but ourselves, our own thoughts and feelings, our graces and our characters? Here in our own hearts and consciences, our immortal souls, is the real kingdom God has given us, and in which he has shut us up forever. We must live forever in this spiritual domain; its walls are impassable. We may escape Esau and his band, but we cannot escape from ourselves. We may evade all external enemies and evils, but one avenger stays ever in the citadel to poison the well we drink from, or one angel to sweeten it into a fountain of life. Jacob was left alone; and every human soul is left alone, alone in the midst of millions, alone in the crowded city, as well as in the wilderness about Jabbok. So near and yet so far are our closest companions!

Who can sit down at the inviolable table of his

own sacred privacy? The Pope eats alone, and every human soul is under the same spiritual necessity. None can share the food which a man's own thoughts and fears, his self-respect or his self-contempt, serve out to him every day. Have you thought what it is to be eternally imprisoned in your own character and self? If we are going a long voyage and know that every comfort we are to have on the weary way we must carry with us, how anxiously we consider our coming wants, how studiously provide for our future necessities, how carefully examine the vessel and the ship's company! For, once at sea, we can take nothing aboard, nor can we leave the ship nor change the crew. In what a vessel and on what a voyage are we launched when God sends us off the ways of his shipyard, freighted for eternity, our spiritual craft — captain, crew, stores, ship — all in one, our inner selves alone and to be alone forever! Ah! when one considers the inevitable necessity of ever keeping his own company, what a motive is offered for making and keeping that company pure and such as it shall not disgust and weary us to associate with! As are a man's thoughts, so is he. What honor from others can make good a man's own self-contempt? What gains recompense him for the loss of his own soul? And when is the soul lost, if it be not when it is without inward peace or comfort in its own self-respect? What but the consciousness of single and unselfish aims, what but pure thoughts and noble aspirations, what

but devout trusts and a Godward and Christ-like heart can long keep a man from finding his life a burden and his future a terror? He may postpone the hour of self-reckoning by a busy, bustling worldliness, a frequentation of crowds, or by pursuit of pleasure and pelf; but the day will come when, like Jacob, he will confront a stream separating him from all his reliances, possessions, and companions. Many a Jabbok of complete isolation will lie in his journey, and one river he must soon pass, over which no man carries anything but himself and the record of his life. Alone he must pass that river, sending neither his flocks nor his friends before him while he stays on this side, but himself going on before, leaving all these things forever behind him. "And Jacob was left alone." How soon shall we be left like Jacob?

2. "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him," and this man was the Lord God. Yes, there is one exception to our solitude, one companion, antagonist or friend, who has always access to our loneliness. It is a thought to give us all a solemn pause, that the only Being who can break, in any profound sense, the solitude of our souls, is their maker and judge! He alone has reserved for himself perfect access to our hearts, — alone knows all our thoughts, witnesses all our ways, and goes every step of our journey with us. The wrestler closes not with his foe in half so tight an embrace as does God with our souls. What are these twistings and contortions of the conscience,

what these inward blows and punishments, what these fearful wringings of our spiritual muscles, when we shudder with inward dread and try in vain to escape our viewless antagonist, but God wrestling with our souls?

> "These obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things;
> Fallings from us, vanishings;
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized;
> High instincts, before which our mortal nature
> Doth tremble like a guilty thing surprised."

Have any of you been able, however young or innocent, to avoid all recognition of that Divine Wrestler? Do you not all bear some black and blue spots from the controversy with him upon your spiritual skin? Ah! what would not the whitest soul in this assembly give to cover over forever the stains in which God has left his mark upon a memory that time serves only to quicken? It was not only the sinew of Jacob's thigh that shrank in that strain. Every faculty of our nature shrinks under God's spirit wrestling with us when we refuse the contest and like cowards flee from the embrace. For God wrestles with us only as the Greek warrior wrestled with his own son, to make him a warrior too; he hurts us only to teach us how to avoid hurts, and strikes us only to show us where we are vulnerable. Faithful are the wounds of that friend. And as it was a *man* that represented God in Jacob's wrestle, so it is mankind and the world that

represent Him in ours. All the trials, temptations, sorrows, disciplines of life are God's embraces, — the Divine Wrestler's hugs and blows, as he carefully tests his child's courage and strength, humbles his false pride, and shows him the weakness of this moral muscle and that spiritual thew. Life and mankind are unintelligible until we recognize in them the activity of a God who hides his love in a blow and his fatherly care in straining grips and distressing clutches such as the Indian brave practises upon his son ere he sends him forth on the war-path. God wrestles with nations and with men, and blood, oceans of blood, flow from the wounds of that terrible wrestling-match. How he wrestled with us, to wrench from our grasp the coveted but forbidden prize of human slavery! How slow we were to recognize his will and his purpose, and how patient he to await our acknowledgment of his presence! He smote us right and left; he carried our children by thousands over the river that has no ferry back; he wasted our wealth by thousands of millions. Yet we would not own his will until he threw us helpless upon his guidance, and made us, like Pharaoh, allow the captives in our Egypt to depart out of their bondage.

God does not always spare or deal gently with mankind when great principles are at stake, and human life is cheap with him when lessons of justice and truth can be written only in bloody graves. When will the world learn to fear the Everlasting Wrestler with its own folly and blindness? When

shall we give over the expectation of circumventing or conquering his holy justice and his sacred truth? When will the fools who despise his providence, trick themselves out in public spoils, squander our taxes in party bonfires and make night hideous with the shouts of their tipsy revels,—when will the prosperous robbers of our city and state believe that God has in store for them a stroke that will leave nothing but their hated memory here and send their souls naked to the judgment-seat where orphans and widows, where bleeding liberty and the hopes of self-government, shall be their accusers?

And let no one of you whom I address think for a moment that God has forgotten you, is neglecting you, does not wrestle with you every day, and will not stick to you until you wrestle with him. You will not know him until you close with him. While you smother his voice, while you deny his presence, while you stand limp and in cowardly shrinking before life and temptation, and see and feel no challenge in the providence that encircles you, you will receive blows that stun without arousing you and flings that seem purposeless and cruel. But once face your foe, and you will find a friend. Once become "God's soldier," Israel and not the evasive Jacob, and you will find God a wrestler who lifts his antagonist, not to throw him bleeding back on the ground, but only to exalt him to holiness and heaven.

3. "Until the breaking of the day." Ah! what a day breaks when the soul realizes who its seeming

foe and enemy in this our human life is, — when it feels that God is the holy friend who is trying it like a refiner in his fire, moulding it like a potter on his wheel, wrestling with it only to develop its strength and bring out the nobleness, heroism, and devotion of its powers! Well did Jacob say, after the struggle of that long night, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." If trial, experience, sorrow, do not bless, they curse us. If we do not know it is God, it will indeed prove to be, not God, but Satan. When Jacob said to the angel that wrestled with him, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name," it was his last shift of misgiving, and the angel rebuked him, "Wherefore is it thou dost ask after my name?" When we do not recognize God in our lives and fortunes, it is because we will not, not because we cannot. To doubt or deny his holy, solemn, and awful presence in life is to be wilfully blind. The soul knows God. It is a hypocrite when it professes ignorance. It has wilfully left home and the father's house to eat with swine.

God is in us. He uses with us the language of the soul, and the soul understands it. Conscience is the tongue of Heaven. Man is a spirit, and spiritual things are not foreign and strange to him, but he runs away from his own light, he darkens his own windows, he denies himself that he may deny God, he scoffs at what he really fears and knows to be sacred and true. He tries to believe in the world and its ways and to sell himself for its pottage. But he has a lurking consciousness that he

is a hypocrite and pretender, even in his vices and follies. He can really revere nothing but goodness. It is only disinterestedness and purity that can excite his veneration. He must have God and the vision of his holy face to give him any true peace, or satisfy him that his life is not thrown away. And when, battered and bruised, he opens his blackened eyes to see that he has been fighting with his only friend, that it is God who is trying and testing him, and that there is a God to love him and whom he can adore and possess, then how is life instantly restored to its true and blessed meaning, then how do Christ's life and death, mission and teachings, become radiant with beauty and meaning! Then how tender and sacred grows humanity, how serious and sweet the life even of labor and sorrow, how rich the soul in its infinite fellowship with saints, martyrs, and heroes, with the blessed Saviour and the holy God! Then, with Jacob, he calls the name of the place where he comes to his senses Peniel, for with him he feels able to say, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." That face of the Lord spiritually seen is "the breaking of day" for the human soul; and blessed is the wrestler that lets not God's angel go until he has shown him his face, for the soul's night is then over forever.

XII.

FAITH IN MAN'S SPIRITUAL WORTH

THE CONDITION OF HOPE FOR RELIGION AND FREE INSTITUTIONS.

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

JOHN ii. 24, 25.

WHAT is in man and what is merely on him or superficially attached to him are different things, — as different as the soul and the body. Jesus knew what was in man; ordinary observers only know what accompanies or describes him considered from without. Knowledge of men and knowledge of man are different things: one refers only to their usual history, the other to their nature and essential quality.

I am not sure whether the words of the text refer to Jesus's knowledge of human nature, its contents and possibilities, or only to his acquaintance with men's usual thoughts and purposes. Very likely only the last, which is a very different thing from the first, covering only what is so often called the knowledge of men; that is, an acquaintance with their weaknesses, the power of seeing through their

designs and forecasting their probable action under given circumstances. This knowledge is often possessed in a marked degree by acute and discerning persons, who not only themselves possess low and ignoble characters, but who sum up their whole conception of human nature in a general suspicion and contempt for their species. Knowledge of the world usually means acquaintance with the vices, selfishness, and weaknesses of humanity. People who trust their fellow-creatures, who readily believe their word, who easily expect them to be influenced by high motives, who think them often actuated by unselfish or pure purposes, are commonly deemed credulous, ignorant, and blind. To know the world — that is, the people who make up the world — is to know how they cover up their selfishness, cupidity, and fraud, their desire for wealth, honor, or station, under the various guises of decorum, politeness, guarded language, or sentimental professions. It is to see beneath their smiling looks the stealthy scowl or sneer or distrust that fills their hearts. It is to listen, in what they say that sounds fair, affectionate, and generous, for what they really think and feel, and to discern behind their masked faces the unworthy sort of men they are. It is to detect hypocrisy in their religious professions, selfish aims in their offers of kindness, some cunning plan hid beneath their openness and frankness of behavior. If they are generous, it is ostentation; if they are blameless in behavior, it is only because they are more cunning in covering up their follies. If they

are bold, it is because they know there is no danger. If they are moral, it is because they are frigid and passionless. If they are worshipful, it is because piety is of such good report and such a capital disguise of worldly ambitions.

Those who have been thought to know the world best have been for the most part cynics, — philosophic despisers of their kind; not always bitter in their contempt, because not earnest enough to think very ill of what such poor, weak creatures as men might do or be, and too conscious of partaking of their weaknesses to have a serious dislike for the follies they have enjoyed their own skill in detecting. They have kept their more genuine hatred for "the fools" who did not share their contempt, the "solemn prigs" who believed in others' virtue, the "blind bats" who would not see the obstinate selfishness they dashed themselves against as if it were yielding air. Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Rabelais, Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, and Swift had more or less of this knowledge of the world, and they have been favorite authors among those refined and laughing people who in every age have regarded any serious view of life or any confidence in humanity as marks of inexperience, credulity, or superstition. Modern French and English novels are full of this knowledge of the world and of graceful and self-complacent contempt for human nature The private talk of cultivated people without moral enthusiasm, all the world over, is a caustic charity for poor human nature, — an amused superiority to

the popular prejudices that expect or demand virtue or unselfish behavior from the world at large. They smile at earnestness, or indignation at folly and vice, or hopes of any considerable improvement in the ways of men. That every man has his price, that every woman is false at heart, that the only difference is in the refinement or coarseness of selfishness, that there is no hope of its abatement or failure to appear in all men and everywhere, — this is their settled creed.

The cynical and contemptuous philosophy of men who know the world, in this sense of the satirists, is built upon the notion that selfishness is the corner-stone and permanent foundation of human nature and life; and, with this postulate admitted, they are right. Ornament the structure erected upon this mean and hopeless base as you will, you cannot make the building any stronger than its foundation. Disguise and shroud the weakness of humanity as you may, it is essentially contemptible and incapable of becoming anything else. A bitter spring may be made to run in marble channels and to play in fountains carved into grace and beauty; but taste the water, no matter at what distance from its source and issuing from any elegant outlet you may fashion, it has the same brackish and fetid flavor. There is a taint in the very blood of this vulgar creature, man, as thus described, that no culture, elegance, or ornamentation can remove. The whole art of civilization is to conceal and cover with graceful devices the painful and dispiriting fact of

human contemptibleness. It is, on this theory of humanity, like the attempts we make in our rural cemeteries, or in our statued tombs, to render death less odious and obvious. After we have done our best to hide it in cheerful gardens, to plant it amid sweet odors and bright flowers, to deck it with marble and bronze, it remains the same old repulsive, hateful enemy, — not one stroke of its fatal victory escaped, not one atom of dust reclaimed from its devouring maw, not one smile set upon its mocking jaws. Jesus, who could be as severe with vice, hypocrisy, and malice as the sharpest censors of humanity, knew nothing of this mocking contempt for man. Paul, who has made the most fearful summaries of human wickedness, weakness, and folly, has not one sneer or one hopeless word in all his moral indignation. Both build their reproaches upon their respect and reverence for the spirit in man, which is full of promise, of dignity, and of glory, and which lets itself down when it yields to sin and folly.

The theory of Christianity is that man is a being made in the image of his Maker; that he carries within him the spirit of God; that he is capable of rising above his carnal and selfish character; and that he possesses in his reason and conscience the elements of an ideal being worthy of the Divine Source from which he sprang. To believe this is faith, and faith is the ultimate principle and the all-controlling method of religion, and when Jesus appeals to man, it is faith appealing to faith. If

man be not the kind of creature Jesus assumes him to be, if he does not possess this spiritual foundation, this possibility of sympathy with his Divine Source, if he have no latent capacity for disinterested goodness, if he cannot love God better than his immediate pleasures and desires, if he cannot clear himself from the dominion of his eyes, his belly, and his loins, if he be naturally and permanently, and by his very constitution, a mean, lustful, self-seeking creature, Jesus might as well have called upon the stones to erect themselves into temples, or upon the beasts of the field to come and worship in them, as to call on man to repent and forsake his sins and to love God with all his heart and soul and his neighbor as himself. Nothing can rise above or pass beyond the limits of its nature. No training, no rewards, no punishments, no patience, can make a brute to be human, inspire him with the sentiment of duty, or interest him in himself and in his own improvement.

But who has found out the limits of humanity? What experience, what study of past history, what catalogue of men famous and gifted, exhausts its possibilities? Were Homer, Plato, Phidias, Dante, Newton, Shakespeare, looked for, or reckoned possible, until they came? Could Moses, Samuel, David, Jesus, Paul, Calvin, Luther, Howard, be anticipated? What made them come? Whence these extraordinary births, these leaps of humanity above its known powers, in forms of genius, character, insight, and faith? Whence but from that fountain of perpet-

ual youth, that inexhaustible spring of newness, beauty, and worth, the spirit of God, incarnating itself in human nature and character, and forbidding us to doubt or deny that anything we hope or long for is possible to man as the inspired child of a Divine Creator? And do the ages merely repeat the old, old story, of exceptional worth and talents in the few and a dreary destitution in intelligence and goodness of the countless masses around them? Is civilization a mere repetition of itself, arts blossoming and flowering for a time only to die down to their roots, peace the rare truce in a prevailing and permanent strife, goodness raising its gentle head, a lamb among wolves, only to be torn in pieces the moment they are hungry? Has there been a fixed ratio of evil and good, of morality and vice, of unselfishness and self-seeking, so that the stones in a kaleidoscope are not more certain to appear in different forms indeed, but with the same unchanging numbers, colors, and proportions of size and shape, than the baser and the better qualities of humanity, more or less pleasingly arranged, but always in one proportion and without the absence or diminution of a single hateful factor, or the increase, improvement, or predominance of a single beautiful and blessed trait? No; let cynics sneer as they will, this is not the history of society or humanity! War still exists; but it is as different an evil in modern from what it was in ancient times, carried on upon principles and under restrictions as different in nations that are Christian or heathen, as medi-

cine and surgery in the hands of barbers and in the hands of skilled physicians. Government, is it the same stern, crushing thing under constitutional monarchies and republics as under Turkish sultans and Russian autocrats, — in the nineteenth century as in the fifteenth, the tenth, the second? Are the relations of nations, of races, of the disciples of different religions, now in the least what they were when Christian, Jew, and Moslem thought it an honor to their several divinities to hate, devour, and murder each other without mercy or stint? Are the victories of steam, of the telegraphic wire, of the telephone, blessings which other times have known? And why not, except that human yearnings for intercourse had not at any previous date reached the pitch which evoked these triumphs of genius and sympathy from the ever fruitful womb of the Divine wisdom, power, and charity? But what is it to confess this? It is to affirm that to faith all things are possible; that mountains will be removed, and seas dried up, and every conceivable help be given to the asking, knocking spirit of humanity, because it is God's own child asking what it needs and is able to receive from an infinite Father.

This is the doctrine of Christianity, that man has in him a secret, sure, direct access to God's spirit! This is what Jesus knew to be in man; and in having this, he knew man to be capable of building up the kingdom of righteousness in himself, in his race, and in the civilization of the future. This is what alone makes faith, hope, and charity possible; and

no delay, no discouragement, no evidence to the contrary, brought any dismay to the Master, or has ever conquered, though it may often have pained and saddened his true disciples. Hoping against hope, believing against testimony, loving in spite of hatred and contempt, these, the real representatives of our humanity, the only fairly developed men and women, the hopeful, trusting, spiritually-minded, have gone on, in good report and evil report, in dark days and rough weather, steadily believing; always heading the good ship for one haven, always sure that the water of life and the bread of heaven would hold out, let calm, panic, and mutiny do their worst, and God's purpose be established, faith's goal be achieved at last.

The Glory of Faith

This is the glory of faith! It cannot be outvoted, outnumbered, or trampled to death, because it is only a little one amid ten thousand. It knows that one spark of fire is worth a mountain of ashes, a rift of blue sky more significant than a whole heaven of clouds and darkness. It reckons with the deniers of life and spirit as one living man reckons with a cemetery of the dead; he is worth them all, multiply them by infinity! The virtue, the disinterestedness, the faith, the hope, the charity in the world, be they more or less, be they as little as the most cynical assume, are still in significance and promise a myriad times more sacred, precious, and sure a foundation of faith and hope than a thousand times their weight and bulk in the selfishness, vice, and folly of mankind are of despair. These

last do not represent *human* nature at all, but only what is inhuman, unspiritual, beastly, animal, in our superficial or carnal manhood; and though they suppress in thousands of men and women the truly human and seldom suffer it to appear in any victorious, captivating, or inspiring form, they are only saddening as they affect the present and their immediate victims, — not humanity, the race, the coming future. I do not know when faith, hope, and charity will triumph, when they will subdue society completely, when they will reach each and every soul that lives on earth or has passed into the unseen world; but I am as confident as I am that I know their divine quality and immortal and resistless power, that there is no reason in God or man why they should *not* make prodigious strides now and achieve sublime victories ~~at any early date~~; but, above all, that they will attain a consummate victory at last!

Faith does not war with carnal weapons and her victories cannot be withstood by mere numbers. Are all the votaries of vice and wickedness in the universe, numerous as they are, combined and animated by any such steady zeal or interest in the triumph of their wretched cause, as moves, inspires, and gives plan, direction, and steady success to the lovers of God, duty, and service to humanity? What is this straggling, divided, aimless host of the followers of carnal lusts and selfish ends, when compared with the drilled, united, clear-seeing, settled friends of goodness and God, though they be only a

handful? One little school opened in a hamlet, with a faithful woman to teach it and a few urchins on its benches, is in a community of ignorant peasants a more formidable rival, a surer victor over the sea of ignorance in which its little cockboat sails, than all the weltering, aimless, drifting stupidity and stolidness of generations. It will conquer because it is pygmy life, and they will succumb because they are only monstrous death! Twelve Apostles standing round Jesus were a match for the Roman Empire standing round Bacchus, Venus, and an impossible Jove. If truth is mighty against error, how much mightier is love against hatred, hope against despair, faith against sight and sense? and what is clear enough as theory is just as clear as fact. The believing, the hoping, the spiritually-minded, have routed the distrusting, the downward-looking, the despairing, the cynics, sensualists, and timeservers in every pitched battle. The latter are still, as they have been in times past, very largely in the majority, but ten thousand of them never counted against one saint in any serious view of human prospects. It is not numbers that rule, it is the quality. An odd thing it is that this very phrase should, by some curious sense of fitness, have been long expressive in England of what the people thought their betters. They called them "the *quality*," and they were right in knowing that quality set against quantity has the sceptre and the upper hand. There are a hundred grog-shops and brothels within easy hail of one of the churches of this

city, but what they stand for, the external, animal passions of men, what is it compared with what that church stands for? and which will stand longest, and which ought to be most afraid of the other? Let my noble friend, our honored fellow citizen Dr. Crosby, answer, and in his courage and faith let us find a solace and confirmation of the glorious victory in store for virtue and goodness.

When we despairingly talk of general declension and loss of human virtue and piety, let us remember that, true as it may be of special communities or even of particular countries or generations, of France, Germany, or America, it is never true of the whole world or the whole race. There may be no country of its size now in existence as cultivated and as marked by genius and refinement as Greece was in its palmy though brief life; but when Greece was great and glorious the ordinary humanity of the globe was grossly barbarous. For a million of enlightened people there were hundreds of millions of savages and semi-civilized races elsewhere. It is the whole world taken together that alone shows what steady, never-receding gains liberty, education, morality, piety, are making. It is not a Pericles or a Phidias here and there, a Numa or a Marcus Antoninus, a Raphael, a Savonarola, a Shakespeare, a Howard, now and then, that shows where the general level of humanity stands. It is not the water-spouts, but the tide, that we must watch, if we would study and estimate the rising level and upward spring of humanity.

Consider the fallacies based upon mistaken ideas of the true measure of progress that produce such discouragement in many minds in regard to the stability of our government and our religion. The times are marked among merely literary men, without moral enthusiasm or faith in man's spiritual origin, by new and increasing suspicions of the worth and durability of our democratic institutions. Prudence and a respect for the popular instincts prevent a very free utterance of these misgivings. I wish they were more explicitly acknowledged, for then they would meet a quicker and more satisfactory answer. They exist, as every man accustomed to talk with scholars and historians and publicists must know, to a very marked degree, both among capitalists and men of intellectual habits, and their origin is plain. Unless Jesus truly saw and knew man to be a spiritual being and all men to have a divine capacity of reason and right, and knew this because "he knew what was in man," — unless humanity is stronger, better, nobler, safer, when it is trusted, when it is free, when it is wholly equal before the law and in the state, than when it is doubted, feared, overawed, set in fixed classes and guided by its superiors, — then democracy is a ruinous, a short-lived, a death-struck fancy and folly.

Such it seems to our English cousins, who regard us as on the rapid road to decline and certain to bring up only against a constitutional king or a despot. Such it seems to many American capitalists and bondholders, as they see the threatening

cloud of Communism slowly rising and blackening, west and south. And I do not wonder at, much less would I reflect severely upon, their doubts and fears. If I did not believe in all men's essential equality in their spiritual essence, and possessed no faith in man's God-occupied heart and soul, no confidence in his moral and spiritual constitution, I too should share these anxieties. If man were not God's child and directed by his spirit, if democracy were based upon anything less than man's spiritual nature, I should think it a very hazardous, and even a doomed experiment.

Certainly the people are not yet very wise in guiding government, or selecting representatives, or organizing industry, or arranging the conflicts of labor and capital, or inaugurating civil service reform; and if these, the ordinary and hitherto the recognized tests of national success, were the true measure of our rightful hopes, then were there ground enough for anxiety and misgiving. But the wonder of wonders in our democratic America is the spread of self-respecting intelligence, aspiration, and private independence, the increase and extent of family life in decent and convenient dwellings, the nearly universal habit of reading, the common interest taken in affairs that are not personal, the attention given to education, the voluntary support offered to religion, the freedom of thinking, the peaceful coexistence of a hundred sects, the free and patient relations between Irish, German, and native races. Nobody can doubt that never before were the masses

of a nation of over forty millions in such essential equality of rights and privileges, in such circumstances of intelligence and aspiration, in such freedom with such order. And this is all due to the national faith in humanity, which alone can think freedom safe and order an interest which freemen will honor most when it is trusted much to the guardianship of common justice and public opinion and little to police and armed force. It is because American democracy, in a sense in which kings were never entitled to use the words, exists "by the grace of God," that it is to be trusted and that it is safe and will outlive its inexperience. I believe in it, in spite of all the open doubts and silent misgivings of the mere intellectualists. It is a good government for the people considered as a whole, and it has their sympathy and support, whatever exceptional classes may think of it. It has produced common blessings never equalled elsewhere; and simply because it is a government based on faith in man as the image of God. It has faith in spiritual principles, and these principles will save as they have blessed and prospered the nation in war and peace, in commercial distresses not in the least peculiar to ourselves, and under congresses good and bad, under presidents and cabinets popular and unpopular. Its principles are popular; they are based on the ethics and faith of the Christian religion, and they will conquer all doubts and survive all misgivings.

And so of the hope, now so often questioned, of our religion. Nothing is more hopeful or indica-

tive of the increase of common light and life than the decay of faith in the mere assumptions and prescriptions of dogma-builders. Think of the vast increase of people intelligently interested in studying and judging for themselves what religious truth is,— of the place discussion, inquiry, individual thinking, have in the world at large on religious matters once held too sacred for the notice or handling of any but a hierarchical class. Was there more religion, was there more faith, when nobody had the interest, the courage, the confessed right, to study and think and worship according to his own will, than now, when interest, awakened conscience, and aroused reason have conquered these rights for all who will use them? Doubt itself is more religious than compulsory, indolent, servile faith. Many views of religion, and particular views of Christianity, doubtless, totter and fall, and the superficial think Christianity and religion involved in their fall; but we might as well think the rising sap that bursts the buds destructive of the safety of the shrub or tree, as to think thought, personal interest, mental and moral courage to inquire and set aside outgrown opinions, a proof of the decline of faith and piety. The Source of thought and of aspiration and charity must smile at our solicitude about his honor and glory, when we confound the decay of human errors and ecclesiastical servitudes with the peril of his spiritual rule. I believe that there have been more thoughts, and more educating thoughts, of God since men got off their knees with their faces turned

to the ground, and stood upon their feet straining their sight to look into the very eyes of the Great Invisible, than ever before since his worship began in blindness, fear, cowardice, and the dominion of fancy and interested economizers of popular superstition.

The last fifty years have produced more Lives of Jesus than all the previous ages since his birth. His human character, his person, his words and ways, everything touching his brief public life, have been studied and set forth with a freedom, a research, a carefulness of investigation, that indicate the serious curiosity, the profound interest, the admiration, his wonderful personality has aroused. For eighteen centuries, these inquiries were paralyzed by superstition. Faith was honored in proportion as it went blindfold. Ignorance was called the mother of devotion! Are we, then, to regard the wholesome diversities of opinion, the new and varied curiosity, the learned attention, the wide popular demand for Lives of Christ, as proofs of a decline of his kingdom, alarming signs of irreverence and scepticism, or rather as fresh and ever increasing proofs of the hold his character and teachings have upon the world? In spite of the decline of priestly influence, church dominion, and implicit credulity, there never was a day when Jesus had so lofty a throne in the common heart of humanity as now. He has come down from a seat in the clouds, from the blinding glory of a mystic adoration, to become the companion, guide, and example

of men, — to be to us what he was to his disciples, one on whose bosom we may lean and freely ask him questions in our doubts and perplexities, — more truly divine, because so exquisitely and intelligibly human. His kingdom is now building upon the earth, and not merely in the skies.

XIII.

THE SIMPLICITY OF TRUE RELIGION.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS xi. 3.

BY *simplicity* as opposed to *subtilty* we commonly understand the first natural direct action or impression of the mind, heart, or conscience, as compared with the action or impression wrought on either of our great faculties by ingenious, complex, round-about, various, or far-fetched considerations. There is simplicity in thought, in conscience, in motive, and there is subtilty in thought, conscience, and motive. We notice simplicity in children. They are not distracted at any one moment by many considerations. Their ideas are simple, their motives plain, their acts unambiguous. They are direct; say what they think; are what they seem; do what they like; and are governed by large, obvious reasons, and not by obscure and peculiar ones. As time goes on and people become familiar with the world and its ways,— with books and logic and philosophy, — they grow to be speculative, doubtful, suspicious of natural or spontaneous impressions.

They love to exercise their minds in nice distinctions, to dissent from popular conclusions, to find obscure and profound reasons for things, to practise casuistry in matters of conscience, and to appeal from what they call somewhat patronizingly "common sense" to what they deem to be uncommon sense, — meaning what is peculiar and special to themselves or to a few superior persons.

Now if subtilty means careful, profound, discriminating thought, based upon large observation and experience, it is the very object of all education and training of the mind to attain it. And if simplicity means the ideas and thoughts of the ignorant and the untrained, then we certainly want very little of it. But clearly this is not what the Apostle is thinking of in his distinction between subtilty and simplicity. Doubtless he does commend natural and direct thoughts; but it is because nothing is less entitled to be called ignorant and untrained than our first impressions, our spontaneous judgments. They are not, it is true, costly to the individual; but they represent the training and experience of the race and the whole history of humanity. What we call common sense is the product of the most expensive schooling of the whole past; and what that has not purchased for us is the gift of God, in those luminous instincts and that wondrous power of reason and conscience which represent the insight, knowledge, and moral feeling of our Creator. The best thing to be said of spontaneous judgments is that they are superficial. The reasons for them

which we are able to give are indeed often superficial; but the reasons which lead us to make these judgments so promptly and decisively are, though unstatable from their very reach and profundity, among the oldest, most complex, and most powerful the mind ever feels. When you feel a spontaneous conviction that a thing is wrong, or that a man is untrustworthy, or that an opinion is false, the grounds on which you entertain this strong and prompt impression are perhaps beyond the reach of your consciousness; but they are profoundly rooted in the very texture of all your past experience, moral instincts, and hereditary gifts of reason. They are far safer, deeper, and better grounds of action than any self-sought, curious logical processes that could be set in array and in definite statement to the contrary. When Jesus said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," he recognized this truth, that the great things to know and believe and feel, the correct moral judgments, are far more dependent on simplicity of character than on subtilty of mind. Children are not reasoning beings; but they are wise, because they cannot sophisticate and reason away the vast heritage of moral and rational instincts with which they are sent into the world. A child's ideas of right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood, modesty and immodesty,— nay, of God and nature and the soul,— are, in their spontaneous simplicity and freedom from artifice and perversion, sounder and more likely to be verified

by final experience, than the notions on the same subjects of the man of the world, or even of the expert and scholar, who is under the dominion of self-conceit and intellectual pride.

On no subject is *simplicity* as opposed to *subtilty* more desirable than in religion. It certainly would be expected that the most important, universal, and permanent interest of humanity would be, in its nature and evidence, the plainest, simplest, and least dependent on ingenuity and critical acumen. Well, religion *is* the most simple, obvious, and intelligible of human concerns, and, despite its varied forms and dogmas, has really undergone fewer changes and become less sophisticated than any other great interest of life. That there is a God of infinite power and wisdom and goodness who claims our service; that this service consists in loving what he loves, in maintaining his will and doing right, and in being good and helping his children, — this is the simple spontaneous creed of the race, not what they say, but what they feel, the real underlying basis of their faith.

You could go through the world, through the past and even through the coming ages, into all tribes and among all forms of worship, and to all stages of civilization, and you would indeed find many monstrous additions and perversions; but beneath all you would find evidences that these simple ideas obtained, that the best and purest and simplest of the people everywhere had come to this conclusion, and that it was the spontaneous, nat-

ural conviction of the wise and good, all the world over, everywhere, and in all times. Everywhere the women and the children would feel the law of kindness, of reverence, of duty, to be profoundly human and profoundly divine. They might not practise it as a rule, but they would recognize it as sacred. Would there be found any part of the world or of history, in which self-sacrifice, disinterestedness, patriotism, heroism, fidelity to promises in spite of temptation and peril, would not be recognized as admissible and worthy of the love and honor of gods and men? Men would be false and violent and women vain and cunning, cruelty and cupidity would everywhere be found; but those who shunned them would be everywhere known as the religious, pious, and holy ones. Human nature has its animal and beastly side, and it is far the most noisy, showy, and observed side of humanity; but its divine side is never so wholly overlaid or obscured that when smitten it does not give out the spark that shows fire in the flint. Man is a religious being, in spite of all his sensuality, sinfulness, and brutal passions, and his religion is at bottom simple, spontaneous, uniform, direct, and involves only the two elements of reverence to God and righteousness towards his fellow beings.

It is instructive and interesting to observe how utterly simple and plain, how free from all subtilty and dogmatic obscurity, is the teaching of Jesus. What is the theology, for instance, of the Lord's Prayer, — that most universal object of admiration

and reverence among Christians, and even among the heathen who hear it? There is not one word of metaphysics, or uncertainty, or obscurity, — not one word to puzzle any simple mind, nor one word to divide and separate sects. There is no novelty in it. There is not a thought that natural religion does not teach and echo; nothing that a pious heathen might not adopt and rejoice to say. It might become the prayer of all saints in all ages and all faiths, and it will. The same may be said of the theology of the Sermon on the Mount, — if it can be said to have any. It is indisputable, practical, simple, uninvolved in any abstruse, remote, or novel conceptions. It ventilates no ideas that amaze and stupefy, or call for careful consideration on account of their novelty. It is a solemn, searching declaration of the universal religion of humanity. God is holy, wise, good; blessed are you if you are pure, meek, hungering for righteousness, and living from the heart pure, useful, holy lives. This is all the doctrine there is in it; not a word about the nature of the Godhead, the fall of man, the need of the atonement, the deity of Christ, the necessity of baptism and the saving sacrament of the communion. And, indeed, the four Gospels are all simplicity itself, so far as they give us Christ's own words and inculcations. And this is the strength of the Christian religion, — its native cordiality with the religion of nature and the soul, its freedom from what is peculiar, artificial, temporal, local, dependent on anything merely traditional, documentary,

technical, or ecclesiastical. Jesus was no schoolman, was no ecclesiastic, was no heresiarch. He spoke the language and the truth and the religion of a simple, artless, deep-centred representative of universal humanity,— true always, everywhere, and for all. There is nothing to add, nothing to abate, nothing to excuse or to explain away in his certain precepts and inculcations. They do not need the apology of the times, or the race, or the circumstances, to account for them. It is because they give voice to what humanity knows and feels to be deepest and holiest, that they hold the allegiance of the nineteenth, as they will that of the twenty-ninth century. We cannot conceive of anything appertaining to our religious wants or our religious faith that is not already extant in the precepts, spirit, and example of Christ.

The simplicity of true religion constitutes its glory and attests its truth, but it also makes its difficulty, and accounts for the subtilty which has constantly striven to pervert it. It is the plainest and simplest things that most daunt and confuse us. Who can evade the simplicity of a child's direct questions, its clear, unperplexed look into the very heart of an action or motive? What so threatening as the simplicity of plain conscience, plain common sense, plain religion? Jesus was so unqualified, direct, unmistakable, in his piety and morality, that he confounded his enemies and alarmed his friends. "This is too plain-spoken, too direct, too personal," how often we feel in the presence of the single-

eyed and simple-minded, who have no circumlocutions and no capacity of insinuation or evasion! They go straight to the mark. They ask first and only the very question of questions, reserved by more practised minds and world-trained manners for the end of a long string of preliminary inquiries. How we strive to get rid of the spontaneous, immediate remonstrance of our conscience, or its instant command! Come, let us reason together, we say to our great, but peremptory and taciturn guide, who has given at once his best counsel in the terse form of "No," or "Yes,"—"You ought," or "You must not." And the very proposition is one of subtilty. Conscience cannot parley. It is not an advocate, but an oracle. It can only nod its approval or shake its head in disapprobation. We might as well reason with a time-piece. It has told all it knows when it has forbidden or approved. But we choose to go back of its decision, and we treat it as we might a watch whose face gave us unpleasant evidence of our tardiness, moving the hands from the back to suit our own wishes.

We can very easily make the clear, simple, moral fact precisely what we choose to have it by enough casuistry. And as we treat our consciences, so we are apt to treat our religion. God has pronounced it simple, plain, unmistakable. Christ has taught and illustrated it in ways a child can understand. But it is so plain that it becomes severe; so simple that it looks cold and hard, like a marble statue. Its simplicity leaves us no loopholes of escape from

its commandments. It cannot be, says the Satan of subtilties, that Jesus really expected us to be what he was and make his character our example. It cannot be that he really expected us to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves! This is very simple, but it is so exacting and so hard! It is easier to believe a much more complex and inexplicable creed than to practise this very simple one. And so, not because it was unintelligible, but because it was too intelligible, — not because it was uncertain, but because it was too plain, — the subtilty of the Church and of the Christian world has upholstered and stuffed and cushioned and draped the simplicity of religion, until it has been made as great a mystery as an Egyptian mummy in its endless wrappages. How much easier for the soul, reluctant for duty and self-sacrifice, to spend its time in high speculation about the nature of the Godhead than in plain obedience to an imperative voice of God enjoining us to shun evil and do right! How much lighter work to bow when Jesus's name occurs in the creed, and to give him all the honors and worship of a God, than to keep his moral precepts and put on his meek and loving temper!

And so the theology and worship of Christendom are really made gorgeous and mysterious shrines, where the simplicity of Christ lies buried. Build a great cathedral and clothe it in marble and gold; publish from priests in lawn and many-colored robes a creed so knotty and metaphysical that not a soul shall have any clear idea of what it

means; accompany it with the finest strains of music and the fumes of incense; — an artless child, homesick and weary amid the splendors of a palace, for which the simplest barnyard would be a grateful exchange, is not more out of place than the simplicity of Christ dressed up in these tautological dogmatic propositions, or in these trappings of the world's vanity and sensual cravings for external form and show.

I often hear the simplicity of Christ as it reveals itself in the Sermon on the Mount compared disparagingly with the voluminous faith of the Nicene Creed, or the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Saybrook Platform. What! call that the Christian religion, which really adds nothing to the old Jewish and the older natural religion of love to God and love to man, except the example and spirit of Jesus! What becomes of the Fall, and the Curse, and the Atonement, and the Sacraments, and the Trinity, and the Deity of Christ, and all the rest of the dogmatic paraphernalia of religion? They become invisible, like candles in the presence of the sun; they fall, like tents rich with hangings when the sky clears and spreads its own tabernacle about us. It is the *keeping* of these great commandments that discloses their richness and fulness. They are simple, few, and compendious. But live by them, and you will find that all the bodies of divinity in the world could not contain their lessons, or describe the glorious richness of their contents. If we are to have substitutes for holy living, nothing can be more effect-

ual than hard metaphysical dogmas, or disputes about modes of worship. But to promote and exact real morality and true piety I can conceive nothing so well fitted as the simplicity of Christ, — the plain, unequivocal, uninvolved requirement of love to God, tested by love to men and active usefulness in life.

Do not allow yourselves to fall under the dominion of these sounding subtilties, these dark dogmas, these involved metaphysical puzzles, that pass for religion and Christianity. They will unsettle your common sense, and befog your conscience, and finally make you think religion not the plainest thing in the world, — a highway, in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err, — but an enigma and a riddle, a sphinx which you must helplessly bow before and adore, though she will answer no question you put to her. It is not the unknown we can profit by, but the known. It is not the obscure, but the plain, that should have our attention. It takes no learning, no scholarship, no formal logic, no fine-spun reasoning, to know God so far as we need to know him, as a moral governor and father of spirits; to know Christ as a holy, gentle, and wise master and guide of character; to know our duty well enough to live chastely, truthfully, honestly, with mercy and sympathy.

And this is all we need to know to fulfil all the obligations and to reach all the blessings of religion. I know the extravagant ideas of superiority which most people attach to the opportunities of professional thinkers. They humbly think that these

thinkers know as much more than themselves about religion as they do about philosophy, science, and literature. But they do not. The most advanced and accomplished would confess that he knew but little more about God, duty, and religion at the end of his studies than at the beginning. How much more do the people who sound and explore the ocean and study its tides know of its dignity and glory than the peasant on the shore, or the common sailor in the shrouds? A good pair of eyes sees not so far and not so minutely, but *more* than microscope and telescope can, because they see broadly and see things in relation, and often the very depth of our scrutiny destroys the sense of harmony which belongs to and reveals things.

The common sense view of religion, as of life, is the true view. Eccentric or exceptional views are usually erroneous. Trust your capacity to know God and to understand Christ by directing a plain common-sense intelligence towards them. I never had any confidence in religious opinions or conclusions, or any insight satisfactory to myself, until I learned the wisdom of trusting my own spiritual senses. Trust yours. Have the courage of your own real opinions and conclusions in regard to religious things, and do not be mystified and misled by great, swelling words, even if borne on the breath of multitudes beyond number. Recollect that the minority, if faithful, usually hold the actual opinions of the majority. I do not believe the religious confessions and dogmatic statements of the Church,

however urged, or however popular in form, tell us the real beliefs of men. They are held provisionally, or for church purposes, not for private use or absolute reliance on the individual soul. But above all, know that a religious faith which is not for working uses, is not worked out, and does not control and shape a man's heart and life, is of no consequence whatever. It is like a sick man's dinner, sumptuous and costly, carried to his bedside, but loathed as soon as tasted, and set as quickly as possible outside his door. It has no nourishment for him, because he has lost his appetite for it. You have no more faith than you practise, no more religion than you live out, and no Saviour unless he be found *in* you. This is simple, plain truth. Allow no spirit of subtilty to hide or deform it, though it come in an angel's shape.

XIV.

UNWORTHY CONCEPTIONS OF GOD.

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

GENESIS xviii. 25.

WE are just at the opening of a season known in the Catholic Church as Holy Week, celebrated with solemn fastings and humiliations in sympathy with the sufferings and death of Christ, and ending in joyous songs and festive rejoicings in honor of his resurrection. For forty days the Church in some of its great branches has been keeping Lent, with more or less self-restraint and abstinence from the ordinary appetites and pleasures of the world and the flesh, — a season during which the thoughts of faithful disciples are supposed to be fixed peculiarly on eternal realities, on the hatefulness of the sin that made Christ's sacrifice necessary, the glory of the redemption accomplished by his interposition and oblation, and the blessedness of the hopes enkindled and secured by his resurrection.

It is well that these sacred customs survive to show us the literality and implicitness of the faith of earlier generations, whose subjection to tradi-

tional ideas and a defective culture made them unintelligent but most hearty and earnest disciples of notions of God's government and Christ's mission which the Protestant world has largely outgrown, and whose dominion we as Unitarian Christians have absolutely repudiated. The Church for fifteen centuries thought this world and all its children to have lost by the sin of Adam imputed to his offspring the favor of God, its maker, and to be lying under the wrath and curse of the Almighty. It deemed all men by nature children of wrath, and doomed to endless punishment. It saw no tendency in God's general providence to advance the moral interests of humanity, and it deemed all the moral worth that did exist and all the natural and social virtues of mankind as "filthy rags of righteousness." Men could do nothing by any moral endeavors, or by any obedience to natural conscience or the light they had, to please God or win his future acceptance. In his offended sight they were all born rebels and natural enemies, already condemned to death. They were born under a law of absolute rigor, as binding upon those who did not know it as upon those who did, to render a perfect obedience to requirements which to their fallen nature were an utter impossibility. Who can wonder that the declaration that the Son of God, who was soon claimed to be God himself, had taken on flesh and humbled himself to the death of the cross to appease his Father's anger and to bear in his own body on the accursed tree the weight of all

human sins, and so to render it for the first time possible for God to forgive his children, on condition of their accepting Christ as their substitute and believing in his atonement, should have filled the world with transports of gratitude and joy, should have been welcomed with wild enthusiasm, or that the season which marked its promulgation should have become an epoch of transcendent interest and commemoration?

The death of Christ was in this view of it the life of all his disciples. He paid the hopeless debt of his bankrupt race. He took all the stripes they merited, bore all their endless tortures, and, fully equal to the appalling office, stood between them and the just anger of Omnipotence, gathering together into one sheaf and receiving in his own heart the myriad spears that were aimed at the breasts of all his brethren.

It seems never to have occurred to the simple souls who greedily accepted this deliverance that it reflected any shame or blasphemous imputation on the original character of the Creator. They seem never to have asked themselves how it was possible to conceive of a Being infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness, — the only kind of deity who could claim the reverence and love of moral beings, — as creating a race which, in the persons of its first ancestors, Adam and Eve, could be permitted to fall at once into absolute alienation and despair, and yet be encouraged to go on propagating and multiplying descendants, all of whom were to be born ene-

mies of their Creator and devoted to ruin and misery. It was thought then that God was so high above all human judgment that it was presumptuous to apply to him any of the moral rules that men were called upon to respect in estimating their fellow creatures.

It must be remembered in extenuation of the folly of this opinion, that, while the Jewish law and dispensation were far above the heathen maxims or ideas of their gods, they were just as far below the ideas which Christianity has slowly developed in connection with the whole progress of civilization in modern times. The heathen propitiated their gods, but never pretended to approve their characters. They offered them sacrifices and external worship, but not the affections of their hearts or the approval of their consciences. In short, the moral element entered very little into heathen religion. It was power, caprice, fate, that the heathen bowed themselves before, and not goodness, truth, and holiness. And so even Abraham, the father of the faithful and the great predecessor and founder of Israel, although greatly raised above heathen blindness, exalted and provided rather for the external recognition of Jehovah as the one and only God, infinite in might and in sovereignty, than for the personal and heart-felt service of him by children who could know, revere, and love him for what they saw to be his loveliness, justice, and mercy.

There was something at the very core of the Jewish dispensation which made it impossible for God

to appear in his real character. For it was professedly and of its very essence a partial religion, which proclaimed God as the God only of a chosen people, — a God who hated the Gentiles and commanded them to be slain and exterminated without regard to personal character, men, women, and children being by his command put to the sword and not a living thing permitted to survive the advance of the conquering Israelites, as they proceeded to slaughter whole nations of Canaanites and take possession of their lands and their property.

There is nothing in the history of the Turkish Mahometans more dreadful, in their use of the sword against "the Infidels," — that is, the Christians who opposed their faith in the Arabian prophet, — than in the mission of Joshua against the Canaanites, because they worshipped not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or the God of Moses. Nothing could justify Joshua except the confidence of a divine command, a confidence which Mahomet and Ali and their followers felt in equal strength and with equal reason. That they were in either case able and willing to believe that God did command or could command such atrocious, cruel, and unjust things, or that a being who could give any such orders had a character that could be worshipped by lovers of justice, mercy, and goodness, is the melancholy evidence how little reason, morality, and true religion then prevailed.

But the current morality and religion of the world are never much in advance of its general intelligence,

its popular virtue, or its usages and customs. Such notions of God as Moses and Joshua were bold to assert, and doubtless fully believed to have come directly from the mouth of God, were the only notions which men of their time were able to receive or entertain. Remember that it was a time when our modern conception of man as an individual, a person, with his own sacred, independent rights, had not been born into the world, — a time when heads of tribes, princes, little kings, Arab sheiks, or other rare leaders or fathers of communities, were the only true persons. The rest, the common people, the women, the children, had no separate existence; they were mere properties, appendices, attached parts of the great person, the only real person, their chief, whose honor, whose deeds, whose crimes, whose word or promise, whose treachery and its requital, had to fall, and did fall, without any sense of wrongfulness, upon all who belonged to him. If a man was to be punished for a crime, his wife and children, his servants and dependents, were involved in his punishment, and were killed outright, precisely as if they had been physical parts of his own body. If a member of a tribe wronged a member of another tribe, the whole tribe were guilty, and the offended tribe all rose to punish the offence without limitation. The law of retaliation was universally received and was honored in the Jewish law. The people were just as earnestly taught to hate their enemies as to love their friends. The practice of Goel, or blood-guiltiness, by which the nearest of kin was obliged to

pursue to the death any person who had slain his kinsman, was in perfect operation. We have in our Indian tribes, as well as in the African and Asiatic wilds, survivals of these customs and ideas which we feel to be so unworthy of human nature, — how much more of infinite goodness, justice, and holiness!

It would be grossly unjust to charge Moses, or Joshua, or David, — who so heartily cursed his enemies, — or Deborah, — who praised the treachery of Jael when she drove a nail into her Kenite kinsman's head, Sisera, who had claimed the hospitality of her tent and been wooed into confidence by womanly devotion to his wants as he fled before the Israelites, — or old Jacob with his fraudulent arts, or Abraham with his lie about his wife being his sister, or any other of the Jewish people, with being below the standard of their times, or as otherwise than pardonable for their imperfect morality. They all lived in a time when cunning and fraud were parts of the approved policy of all leaders who sought to accomplish ends that were in themselves useful. We still think it lawful to use spies in war, to lay hidden torpedoes in the way of enemies' ships, to tell lies in the work of national defence, to deceive, and lay ambushes, and make feint attacks, — in short, to use falsehood and mean cunning. The respectable advocate asserts the innocence of his client who has already confessed to him his guilt. We fire in war upon promiscuous masses of fellow creatures, whom we do not recognize in their indi-

viduality at all. They are only enemies because they are Hessians, Indians, or Mexicans.

Our manners and customs are still rank with legal and social fictions, which are only lies of usage and permission. But it would be unreasonable to expect the people of any age or generation to be much above the common conceded customs or moral standards of their time. We do not blame our Puritan fathers for burning witches or hating Quakers, but we should be very much pained to be obliged to think that God ordered or approved it, even if he permitted it in the order of a progressive law of his providence in the education of the race. For the thing to consider in regard to the Jewish law, and the thing seemingly ordered or approved by God, is that it proved itself a real mitigation of, and a slow advance upon, the heathen world's morality, and that out of it at last came that pure and perfect system of morality, the bright consummate flower of the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensation which we call Christianity.

Now it is equally certain that in the interpretation of Christianity ideas and customs derived from a condition of things still surviving in uneducated and unmoralized regions, but which are wholly temporary and unworthy the best conscience and light of humanity as developed under the gospel of Christ, have continued to cleave to and to color its real simplicity. Thus the representative character of Adam, as involving in his fall all his descendants, is nothing but an old heathen and untenable theory of

the absence of all rights or independent claims in individual persons, — the right of heads of families to sacrifice, in their own caprice, all the lives and possessions of their tribe or clan. What should we think of bringing back into our society the old Roman law, once undisputed, of a father's right to take the life of his son at his own will, or a husband's right to put away his wife from mere weariness of her, or to kill his slaves in sport because he owned them, or a monarch's right to slay a hecatomb of innocent persons in honor of his royal guest or his birthday, or of a quarrel between families lasting a thousand years? Henry VIII. kept Europe for a whole generation agitated with his absurd scruples about the lawfulness of his accomplished marriage with Anne Boleyn, grounded on some hypothesis of a remote kinship, which he feared, or pretended to fear, imperilled his soul. Common sense was wholly lost sight of in canon law, and the greatest doctors in the churches of Italy, France, and England disputed the question for years, while the poor innocent queen was tortured with uncertainty as to her lawful relations with her husband. We should scout the whole miserable quibble out of court to-day, because we have a clearer conscience of good and evil.

Notions just as crude and immoral as these prevail in popular theology, an inheritance from the time when social and political ideas of the kind I have specified were commonly received. The absolute right of kings to dispose of their subjects at

their own caprice reflected itself back upon the Divine sovereignty. Men asked, and thought it reverential to ask, Shall not God do what he pleases with his own creatures? What right has the clay to say to the potter, Why hast thou formed me thus? or creatures to say to their Creator, Why do you so? with beings whom he owns, and has an absolute right to use as he pleases? The old fiction, the king can do no wrong, was considered still more applicable to God. He is absolute and irresponsible, men said, and may do what he pleases, and it becomes right; that he does it, or orders it, makes it right.

But this is all a fatal mistake. When God made man a moral being, and stamped his rational image upon him, he proclaimed himself a moral being, subject to the moral judgment of his creatures; he freely abandoned all right and all wish to be considered an arbitrary, capricious, yet infinite sovereign, whose might made right, and whose will acknowledged no obligation to observe the law he had proclaimed to others to be of absolute authority and holiness. God thus proclaimed himself a constitutional and not an absolute sovereign, a moral sovereign governed by law, the law of justice and holiness. He freely invited his children to *judge* his government. His appeal to their obedience was to follow him in doing only right, to be followers of God as dear children. He made it our duty to think him incapable of caprice, partiality, injustice, or wrong in any way. He put it upon us to

attribute to him whatever our moral nature discovered to us to be just, holy, beneficent, and never to believe him capable of acting with wilfulness, or anger, or mere pride of place. It is no longer humility and meekness to say that things which are clearly wrong or cruel or inhumane in men to do, it may be right in God to do because he is an infinite sovereign.

It was thought very noble and pious for saints to say, a hundred years ago, that they were willing to be damned for the glory of God. But what sort of honor is it to God for his children to assume the immoral idea that he *could* receive any glory from the damnation of any of his creatures? What noble or exalted man would be willing to have his own dignity, repute, ease, or station furthered by any act of cruelty or injury done to a dependant who had fallen into his power? What difference is there between the theological notion that millions of poor, weak, untaught heathen are to burn in hell forever, in honor of God's law, or God's sovereignty, or God's right to do as he wills with his own, and the king of Dahomey's ordering a hundred or a thousand captives and slaves to be sacrificed in honor of his birthday, because he owns his subjects? Certainly the arbitrary exercise of power can least of all be justified in the Being whose justice, holiness, and love form the moral centre of the universe. We hear of the peril of judging God by our own conscience, or our own moral sense, and of saying he *cannot* do this or that, because it scan-

dalizes our sense of what is just and wise and kind. But how much more dangerous is the fashion of judging God by our carnal passions and mere social prejudices? of attributing to him the practices and the infirmities of irresponsible power, and justifying him in anything obviously wrong and tyrannical ascribed to him by any supposed authority, simply on the score of his being too high and too unlike ourselves to be under any moral obligations or answerable to any standards of right?

If there be anything which a just and holy and truly reverable and adorable God must delight in, it must be in his children's holding him as incapable of base, cruel, or immoral actions. Suppose the son of a good, wise, and just father should, while absent from home, receive a message purporting to come from that father requiring him to do something in itself base and cruel; and suppose the handwriting to be unmistakable, and that the messenger carried the father's signet ring with him in evidence of the genuineness of the message, — which would be most honorable to the father, the abject obedience of the son to these cruel instructions, or his angry refusal and bold denial of the messenger's good faith? A true son, supposing him to know his father as a good, pure, and true man, would say, "I cannot explain this message. The handwriting is my father's, the signet is his, but certainly this wicked message has been extorted by force and has mischief for its end and origin. It is not my father who here speaks, and I honor him

too much to obey any such base instructions. He has gone mad or been betrayed; but I cannot insult him by believing this to be his word."

It is by an analogous method that the human soul has to some extent gradually thrown off the dreadful tyranny of a theological system which has attempted to break down man's moral and rational nature in the supposed honor of ecclesiastical traditions, or of written words claiming to come from God. Noble, upright, brave souls have said, "Nothing mean, nothing cruel, nothing that would dishonor a pure and righteous man, can possibly proceed from or possess the authority of God. It is high treason to think meanly of him, or to ascribe caprice, partiality, cruelty, or inhumanity to him. Anything claiming to come from him must be high, noble, holy, and right. And it is cowardly to say that in deference to his greatness and sovereignty we must blind our eyes, or refuse to pay respect to our best conscience, in estimating acts that are ascribed to him and denying them to be his acts, if they require us to falsify our standard of what is right, true, and good." Faith is not ready acquiescence in wrong or in moral evil, because God is charged with having commanded it. Faith is confidence in our moral instincts as the best evidence we have or can have of the Divine will and the Divine character. The man who palters with his conscience and is weak enough to say that what is plainly wrong for him may be right in God is simply a moral coward. He has not the courage of his convictions. He is

more afraid of God's caprice than truly adoring of his holiness. He is bowing down before power and authority and not before infinite justice and goodness.

This is precisely the controversy which is now going on between a theology based upon the imperfect conceptions of God and duty, truth and goodness, unfolded in our infant revelation called the Old Testament, and a theology which is based on conscience and the soul considered as God's image, the theology taught by Jesus Christ, which is a distinct and permanent overthrow of that provisional and imperfect theology which was based on the "Thus saith the Lord," instead of "Thus saith the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The whole disturbed condition of religious thought is due to the secret, subtle agitation of this momentous question. Can anything be as sacred, imperative, reliable, as the voice of God speaking in the conscience? Can anything justly claim to come from God that contradicts this voice? Is it reverent and Christ-like to believe that God can be capricious, jealous of his authority, capable of demanding what he knows men cannot do, holding them responsible for the sins of their ancestors, punishing one for another's sins, condemning them for misfortunes of their birth, education, or age? I say distinctly that this is just what Jesus Christ would *not* do. He set aside the imperfect legislation of the old Jewish fathers precisely on this ground. It dishonored God. He proclaimed a universal morality;

he appealed to every man's conscience; he honored human nature. He was the greatest religious reformer and the boldest moral innovator the world ever saw; for he broke the iron chain of enslaving tradition and false reverence for mere power; he took away the servile spirit of flattery and false humility, that made man think God pleased with the prostration of reason and conscience before infinite authority. I mean that his spirit, teachings, character, tended to take it away, — although, alas! men still cling to it, and demean themselves, and grovel in supposed honor of Jesus and God in dogmas that it would disgrace any human monarch, or any good man, to originate or publish as his own.

That the world is under the curse of its Maker; that men are born enemies and accursed in God's sight; that Jesus Christ died to appease God's wrath and make his mercy safe and possible; that by any hocus-pocus of verbal confession, or acceptance of any condition other than that of hearty moral obedience, we can be restored to God's approval; — all this is mere heathenish babble and dishonoring to God and man. Let us bravely and unflinchingly recognize its tendency, see it as it is, and, be we few or many, hold on and hold out in proclaiming God, in a human and rational sense, the best, noblest, most generous, humane, just, and intelligible of all moral beings. Let us cling with all our hearts to the glorious accordance of Christ's doctrine with the doctrine of common sense and common conscience. *Our* Holy Week is the week when we

most faithfully own and obey the holiness of God, as the original of all that our nature and conscience most unmistakably declare to be holy. If the gospel of Jesus denied the prior and eternal rights of reason and conscience, we should repudiate it, as the profoundest reverence we could pay the immortal and changeless God of Holiness. That it appeals to and builds itself upon the natural conscience, and leads it on to glorious heights of holiness, justice, and love, is the ground of its inestimable and enduring truth and divinity.

XV.

FEELING AND THINKING:

THEIR RELATIVE PLACE IN FAITH AND PIETY.

I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 25.

THIS passage is especially interesting, because it ascribes to the heart the service which in all modern philosophy and practice is ascribed to the head; that is to say, it puts *feeling* into the place of reasoning. "I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things." We more commonly say, "I set my *head* to work to *think* out the reason of things." Is there, then, a conflict between the head and the heart, and a choice to be made between their testimony? Must people who follow their heads run away from their hearts, and must those who believe and trust in the testimony of their hearts jealously guard against the witness of their heads? Is it possible that we have two great faculties, feeling and thinking, sentiment and judgment, which are natural enemies and not allies and co-workers? If

it be so, clearly the Church has been wise in treating the interference of reason with faith, of science and philosophy with creeds and traditions, as something perilous to man's spiritual interests. If it be so, we are in our generation in a very dangerous and threatening crisis; for this is the very epoch of free inquiry, of curious and unsparing examination of all the pretensions of belief resting on sentiment or tradition only for their justification to the understanding. That is the meaning of Positivism, — the modern revolt against the old grounds of faith. Things must be proved, posited in demonstration, made certain by rational proof, says modern thought. Hitherto the religious leaders and guides had said, "Be persuaded in your heart! If you find that a thing, or a wish, or a hope, is in accordance with your best feelings, believe it, no matter what your reason may have to say against it. You have a soul and your *heart* is the voice of that soul; do not allow your mind, which is a fallible, feeble, and terrestrial portion of your nature, to lord it over your soul or the revelation that addresses the soul. The Bible addresses your heart, not your mind. It rouses your moral and spiritual affections, and bids you believe in God and duty, in heaven and immortality. On the other hand, your reason, understanding, mind, head, (or whatever else is a part of your logical and critical nature,) finds objections, difficulties, contradictions, extravagances, in the faith which is alleged to be that of the Bible and the heart. If you listen to them, you can never have

any peace, and you will soon have no faith. They unsettle everything, as the state of public faith is now showing. Everything is in dispute and uncertainty. The only people in full enjoyment of faith and confidence in their religious hopes are those who do not reason or think, but who listen to their hearts and accept the testimony of their religious feelings, without any regard to the protests or complaints of the understanding."

There is so much truth and so much untruth, so much we ought to acknowledge and so much we ought to deny, in this general statement of the case between the head and the heart, that I must beg your careful attention to some close discriminations.

What is the ground of the distinction between the heart and the head? The heart, the representative of the emotions, is the central and all-important animating organ of the human frame. It begins to work, and works most powerfully and passionately, before the head acquires its best strength. We feel, we love, we desire, strongly, before we think clearly. And we think and can think only of what we have first felt. Our feelings, which include our appetites, passions, and affections, are the motive powers, the original, self-animating fountains of our life. They are original forces, that come upon us and possess us, and constitute the wealth and strength of our nature. Imagine a human creature without desires, feelings, affections, but possessed of mind,— an impossible conception. What would he be like, if not like a goldsmith's balance, of delicate con-

struction, fitted to weigh and note precious things, but with no interest in weighing them, and therefore never taken out of the glass case in which the balance is kept from dust? A mind without a heart to animate, occupy, and employ it would be like a river-bed scooped out and with mills set over it, but without water to fill its channel or turn the wheels of its mills. We may have strong feelings, active hearts, ardent desires, without an active mind to direct and guide them, but an active mind without feelings, desires, and affections to set it in motion and employ it would be like a mill without grist, water, or steam.

Now, as human beings all, and without any great distinction, have hearts, — that is, desires, passions, emotions, affections, — and hearts which correspond in many ways one to another, it is very certain that the original basis of all judgments has been the heart, and not the head. What men have agreed in feeling, in hoping, in loving, in desiring, and have gone on trusting in and building society and religion upon, is a sort of involuntary testimony proceeding from their very nature, which has acquired immense and well-deserved strength and authority. It is not, however, to be admitted that the head, the representative of the reasoning faculties or the critical part of our nature, has been wholly inactive at any time. Children reason long before they know it or we observe it, and people at all stages of civilization are influenced and guided more or less by their understanding, long before they distinguish between feel-

ing and thinking. The head is the lantern of the heart, from the very time that experience begins to show man that his feelings are not always safe guides, and that he stumbles walking only by their flaring and intermittent light. For we have feelings in excess of what is safe and sound. Take the feeling of hunger or thirst, the feeling of anger or of desire for possession, the passion of love or power. They are in their very nature irregular. We eat and drink from mere gratification of the palate long after hunger and thirst are satisfied. Our desires often come in conflict with the desires of others. Then sickness or danger brings us to a pause. We begin to act from prudence, which is a mental or head grace that comes from thinking and is critical in its whole operation. And so it is that reflection, reasoning, the understanding, mixes more and more with the emotions, passions, desires, that flow from the heart, and is finally recognized as the helm of the ship, of which the affections and passions are the sails and the wind that fills them.

Any effort to place the critical part of our nature, or the purely intellectual part, the reasoning and judging part, in independence of the instinctive, emotional, passional part, is like setting up weaving and spinning against and apart from the staples — the wool, the cotton, the flax — they work in. Life is what we are, what we feel, desire, and love. The critical faculties are subordinate to the emotional, not in being lower in place, but as existing for their sake; as a government exists for the people, and not for

itself. And they are higher in place only that they may overlook the road and guide those who walk in it. The driver is not superior to the passenger, for whose sake he is elevated in his seat. The reason or understanding is not superior to the motive power and passions, the feelings and emotions, nor independent of them. But it is over them as guide, moderator, and servant in their employ and charge. Food is even more necessary than cooking. Feeling is more fundamental than judging or thinking. It begins earlier and lasts longer, and is in all ordinary cases much the largest part of human wealth and happiness. This great truth is often overlooked by young thinkers, and especially in our own day. They imagine feeling, emotion, passion, to have no rights, no light of their own, no unconscious wisdom or essential truth, and so misjudge the place they hold in religion and life. But the very opposite mistake is made by those who have attempted to make feeling the supreme arbiter. We know what Rousseau did in this direction to create distrust of reason and the wisdom of experience, which is nothing but the understanding judging the feelings and observing how far they can be safely trusted to their own impulse. He would have remanded man to a state of nature, taken down the gates which experience had painfully built along the sluices of the passions, and justified everything that feeling prompted. We have these protests from time to time against what are called "conventional" prudence and social restrictions, threatening the slow

and precious gains that humanity by self-control has obtained over its own forces. The same folly has prompted the denial of the rights of property, — which are not natural in the sense of being instinctive and universal, but only the best device reason has been able to make for bringing order out of the selfish scramble of mere force, which made property for a long time only what a man could himself hold and defend, and not what at last society agreed in the common interest to defend, for him and for all, the weak and the strong alike.

Now the question is, What amount of light and guidance is there in the heart, considered as the representative of the feelings and apart from the reason or head? The assumption is often made that it has infallible wisdom, and it is met by the denial that it has any wisdom at all. Clearly, those who trust the heart completely for final testimony as to God's will and their own duty must forget that the Scriptures say, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Clearly, they forget that the heart is the seat of the passions as well as of the innocent and gracious affections, — of all other desires as well as of the desire for God. Clearly, humanity in its lower stages is under the less restrained, the more full and allowed influence of the heart, and it proceeds to gratify its lusts, passions, and affections without regard to reason or right. It is the heart out of which all life has come, all impulse, motion, and patriotism, all domestic love and noble feeling. But out of the

same hearts from which these refreshing, pure, and hallowed streams have flowed, have poured turbid and devastating torrents, that have raged in wars, ambitions, cupidities, lusts, that have desolated the face of the earth.

What, then, is this indestructible reverence for the heart, that remains imbedded in our religious language, in spite of these obvious objections? It is a grand and glorious instinct, that teaches us that our affectional and passional nature has at its centre a sacred origin and a beneficent and moral source and function; and that, subject to overflow and violence and storm as it is, it is nevertheless the most sacred and precious part of our nature. Love and lust are parts of one principle, and lust is the source of a large portion of the chief perils, crimes, and follies of humanity. But could we distrust and banish or desecrate love, because it so commonly takes on only the lowest part of its nature?

Nothing can be true, nothing can be complete, which the head may affirm when it contradicts the consenting affirmation of the human heart in its constant instincts, feelings, and desires. We can have no community of feeling, no social, no domestic life, we can have no patriotism, no country, no faith, no God, if we deny the general testimony of human feelings or the teachings of the heart. But we can have no progress, no order, no truth, if we glorify the feelings by pronouncing them as not in need of the control, guidance, and discriminating

oversight of man's critical reason. Thus, that the voice of the people is the voice of God is true or false according as that voice is calm, constant, and coherent, or is wild, hysterical, and discordant. What is true of conscience is true of feeling. Conscience is native in its origin and rights. It pronounces the just to be right and the unjust to be wrong, but it is incapable of pronouncing *what* is just or unjust, except by calling in the whole powers of reason. These powers had been called in long before our day, and had stamped crimes like murder and robbery and arson and treason as grossly and plainly unjust, and therefore wholly forbidden; and these censures have been unconsciously adopted into our very blood and become a part of our inheritance of heart-wisdom. So it is with our religious feelings; they have been strained through the critical experience and judgment of numerous generations of thoughtful leaders, observers, and framers of social order and of religious institutions. Those ideas, hopes, and faiths which have commended themselves to human hearts, with the consent for generations of leading heads, and much more with the concurring experience of human wants and welfare, have become natural and have passed largely into the present life of humanity. What is still questioned is doubtless questioned because it has hitherto escaped the test of a hotter crucible, of nicer and finer judgments now being applied. But no test that claims to set aside feeling, human instinct, or the general testimony of

experience, that ignores and despises the past, and tramples on the native and acquired hopes and aspirations of the better parts of the human race in foregone generations, can be considered as entitled to the name of being reasonable, or as likely permanently to control the human mind.

There is, then, you observe, no more proper antagonism between the head and the heart than between the governor in a steam-engine and the boiler that creates the steam whose use and safety it regulates. In the individual case, the union of the strongest feeling with the clearest thinking is the type of the highest humanity. Civilization is itself the triumph of thought over crude feeling and blind passion; but the triumph would end in a defeat if thought paralyzed or ignored, instead of guiding, feeling and passion. When prudence extinguishes passion or feeling, instead of supplying it with a safe channel, it acts as men would act who in winter should dash water upon the necessary fires in their rude houses to save themselves from conflagration, instead of building stone or iron fire-places to hold them, and chimneys to pass off their smoke and flame in safety. We are, too, often furnished with a one-sided humanity, in which thinking has cooled and weakened feeling, or feeling has smothered and smoked out thinking. We have heads that distrust their own and all other hearts, and hearts that are suspicious of their own and all other heads. Fanaticism, superstition, extravagance, credulity, caprice, folly, characterize the reign of un-

checked and unguided feeling. All the contagious perils in religion, politics, popular amusements, and fashion proceed from feeling unsubdued by thought; all the scepticism, selfishness, apathy, indifference, deadness, disintegration, lack of co-operation, decline of human sympathy, ignorance of human wants, disrespect for hoarded experience, denial of God and immortality, come from the arrogant attempt to make the critical or reasoning faculty independent of, and distinct in its operation from, the feelings, emotions, and passions of humanity, — setting up the head against the heart.

Judaism and Christianity are both forms of reasoning feeling, pervaded with both light and heat. They have been, and they continue to be, distinguished from other religions by the combination of reason with feeling. They honor truth as well as encourage sentiment. Their general direction has been one of light, and not only one of excited feeling; and Christianity from its earliest day has been a union of judgment with emotion. Demosthenes said that eloquence is logic on fire. We may say, in the same way, that Christian faith has been spontaneous feeling regulated by high thinking. What so remarkable in Jesus as the calmness, breadth, and solidity of his understanding married to the fervor of his affections and the irresistible flow of his piety? What so marked in Paul as the vast activity of his reasoning powers in connection with the ardor and impetuosity of his religious zeal and his humane affections? It was passion regulated

by intelligent conviction that made him the second founder of the Christian faith.

In our day the overwhelming stimulus that has been given to thinking, speculation, critical investigation, has tended to chill religious feeling and the nobler passions of cultivated humanity. On the other hand in days and among peoples cut off from a full and free exercise of the intellect, passion has been at the mercy of those who have made a trade of dealing in and with it, and religion has been impulsive, blind, and often perilous. We shall not always, let us hope, have to choose between these equally repulsive extremes. Christianity will never fulfil its ideal, until it is equally the representative of true thinking and hearty feeling.

But, believe me, the greatest and only sphere for thinking is in the observation and reverence of what the heart, the passions, emotions, and desires reveal. If thinkers and critics are so puffed up with intellectual pride as to judge that human passions, emotions, and affections are really less significant and less divine, and less parts of the life of humanity, than the operations of mere thinking, they will be left far behind by the instinctive thinking always going on, without pride and without even knowing that it is thinking, in the average mind. This is the reason why women have often more of the future, and more of the divine wisdom, in their thoughts than men. It is because the intercourse of their hearts and heads is more equal. They are not building up systems, nor writing books, nor

seeking to prove their intellectual superiority; and they allow the wisdom of their hearts to saturate their understandings and the play of common sense to regulate their feelings. Men acquire intellectual conceit, and it at once becomes a mark of their intellectual superiority to distrust their own feelings and those of other men. But the greatest men in the world have been poets, and not philosophers. The noblest intellect has been that shot through with sentiment and passion, as in St. Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. The fine arts are themselves flowers of passion saved from consuming themselves by the chastening of taste.

Alas! how cold, jejune, and lacking in sympathetic power is the faith and religion of mere understanding! But to suspect and banish reason from religion, as if it had only unbelief, atheism, and Christlessness for its outcome, is to divorce the parties from whose happy and well-ordered marriage the perfect fruit of that religion is to be born which an Apostle has declared to be "our reasonable service." Reason must be lifted on the shoulders of passion or feeling, before its vision is worth considering. The head is above the heart, to guide it; but the heart supplies the head with the blood that enables it to see its way. When the head denies feeling, sentiment, passion, emotion, their great place in piety and in life, it becomes a mere lighthouse built on a barren rock, that illuminates only a fixed and narrow region; but when reason honors and reveres the great instincts and motions of

the heart, and asks only how to refine and balance and understand their testimony, it becomes a light in the binnacle, that goes with us through all the voyage, and teaches us how to follow the stars and the sun, while it knows that the winds or the engine, blind though they be, supply the whole motive power of our vessel of life.

The communion service we are about to observe is founded in feeling justified by reason; but reason without feeling would never appreciate its value or enjoy its influence. Let those who are kept away by the prejudices of the understanding learn that they throw a painful suspicion upon the play of their affections and the use of a spiritual imagination. Reason would teach us to forget the very places where the useless dust of our dead resolves itself back to mere earth, — returns to the dust; but feeling builds enduring monuments over the ashes of the dead and lingers long about the sacred spot. Reason might find it easy to let Calvary and Gethsemane and the garden where they laid Jesus's body and the last supper with his disciples be forgotten. What have they to do with principles and actions and life? But feeling, with a deeper wisdom, knows that when Jesus's death and holy and patient sufferings cease to be celebrated, the divine touch which makes our religion tender and consoling will have left Christianity a corpse of cold philosophy without power to move our souls.

XVI.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THE KEY TO THE SECRET OF RELIGION.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

PSALM XXV. 14.

WHY God's will or our relations to him, why religion, its nature, its peace, its faith, should in any degree be a secret, and why they should be named by the Psalmist under so obscure a title as "the secret of the Lord," must confound and baffle most minds when they first come seriously to consider the question. Can it be possible that so grave, practical, and important a matter as God's character and purposes towards us, and our duties and affections towards him, should voluntarily be left in darkness and doubt? Is it conceivable that "the straight and narrow way" we are called by our love of our own souls and at the peril of their salvation to pursue, the high-road to heaven, should be without the plainest finger-posts, the brightest lamps, the most open and obvious guides? Do wise statesmen leave the great edifices of justice, the hospitals of mercy, the seats of custom, the hotels of the stranger's rest, without conspicuous approaches

and unmistakable indications? Is not the main street of a great city's traffic paved and lighted and made as direct as possible? Are not the most necessary and the universally travelled roads those upon which the most pains are expended to make them smooth, obvious, and easy? And can it be that the way to heaven, the avenue between the soul and its Maker, the road of religious duty and safety, is one to be kept secret, to be sought for with curious questfulness, revealed only to anxious inquirers, whispered about in low tones, understood only after painful attention, and even then groped for in uncertainty? Are men left to find out, only after trying many other ways, that this way alone is the true one? Should we not expect that our duty, our way to please God and to acquire inward peace, would be made so plain that nobody, unless wilfully and of wrong and wicked purpose, could mistake it? Might we not have expected that, if God claimed our worship, love, and service, he would have made himself, his will, and our duty as clear as the sun in heaven or the Milky Way, — have set our faces, our inclinations, our intelligence, so directly in the right road, that any failure to fulfil our religious duty would be much like the folly of a rebellious child holding its breath, which it is so natural to draw, to frighten or avenge itself upon its mother?

Is religion, then, this plain and simple matter? Have the nations and ages agreed in any one view of the Divine character, the conditions of salvation,

or the means and methods of pleasing God and securing spiritual peace and the sense of religious content and safety? Not to speak of the diversified and conflicting faith and worship of the four quarters of the globe and the successive eras of human history, we have only to look about our own modern Christendom, or even our own city, to notice how dissimilar and antagonistic are the conceptions, the directions, the assurances which professed teachers of religion sanction and communicate. The Roman Catholic urges his way by mass and sacraments, by faith in mysteries and docility to priestly authority; the Quaker, by waiting on the inward witness of the spirit; the Trinitarian Calvinist, by accepting certain abstruse, incomprehensible and repugnant dogmas, which crucify the understanding, shock the reason, and perplex the conscience; the Unitarian, by conforming the life and character to the personal example, the spirit and temper, of Jesus Christ; the Free Religionist, by following truth wherever she leads, without even aiming at any conclusion. Are all these ways right, or is each only partly right and partly wrong? How shall we choose, and what of each shall we accept and what throw away? Is not the study of a lifetime required for answering these questions? How many have the means of deciding them intelligently? How many have the patience to await the processes by which they can be fitly settled? How many adopt their denominational position by pure selection and deliberate choice? The Roman-

ist as a rule is born such; so is the Methodist, the Baptist, the Episcopalian, the Unitarian. And clearly it is in obedience to some broader principle of divine will that, as a rule, our external church is chosen for us, not by us.

> "He whom God chooseth, out of doubt doth well.
> What they that choose their God do, who can tell?"
>
> LORD BROOKE'S *Mustapha*.

If it were only pure intelligence and deliberate choice that fixed men as Catholics or Protestants, as Lutherans or Calvinists, as Trinitarians or Unitarians, how many would ever connect themselves with any religious organization? It is not, however, on this account just to say that opinions such as separate the churches and sects of Christendom or humanity are not important, are not worthy the most scholarly and laborious elucidation and discrimination. But it is just to infer that "the secret of the Lord," the way to heaven, the key of the divine kingdom, cannot be the power of deciding between or among these different systems of opinion. "The secret of the Lord" must be equally accessible to Catholics and Protestants, Trinitarians and Unitarians, for certainly people find religious peace and moral and spiritual salvation within all churches and in connection with all opinions. Equally certain is it that people lose religious peace and the knowledge, love, and service of God in all sects, under all degrees of light, and with all shades of intelligence. God clearly is known, loved, and served in a saving way by very ignorant, men-

tally confused, and incoherent souls. He is not known, loved, and served, it is equally certain, by many very gifted, intellectually disciplined, and grandly furnished souls, that know all sciences, philosophies, and forms of faith and worship. Their uneven temper, their vicious conduct, their selfishness, their discontent, their sadness and unbelief, often prove great, learned, and gifted men to be ignorant of "the secret of the Lord," while the obedience, the patience, the serenity, the sweetness, the disinterestedness, the hope, faith, and charity, of the ignorant, unenlightened, and unreasoning, often prove them to have found "the secret" and to be in actual possession of the peace and joy it sheds and the light it supplies to their way. Not that learned, inquisitive, and scientific minds may not and do not attain to the saving knowledge of God, and all the more completely because of their mental discipline. But they do not do it by their science and philosophy alone or chiefly. Nobody ever yet found a God to love and serve, a God to pray to and to trust in, exclusively or chiefly by the means of his learning and thinking; nor was ever anybody so unlearned or incapable of logical and discriminating thought that he could miss God and the secret of the Lord, if he sought them by the way which princes and serfs, the most learned and the least learned, the Newtons, the Bacons, the Pascals, the Southern freedman, the Irish peasant, or the wild Abyssinian, must all take, if they would really find him and enjoy his friendship, guidance, and support.

Learning, thinking, philosophizing, speculating, system-making, have their imperative claims on all who can be aroused or are capable of attending to these intellectual duties. They throw light upon the divine nature, and open up grounds of new admiration and wonder; they have their own imperative rights and their own glorious privileges. But they are not especially religious privileges; they are not indispensable to religious light, so far as its saving qualities are concerned; they do not bring peace and assurance; they do not determine character and frames of feeling, nor settle the direction in which the soul is going. We can travel away from God as our father and moral and spiritual governor in the full splendor of the broadest knowledge of his powers and glories as a creator, his boundless skill as the designer and fashioner of the myriad beauties and contrivances of animal and vegetable life. All his suns and stars, though we read the heavens with Kepler's or Newton's own intelligence, and track the light billions of miles to its most distant urn, can throw no ray upon that viewless path by which the ignorant savage, who still thinks the earth a fixed globe, around which the heavenly bodies roll, a few miles up in the sky, and the most profound and comprehensive astronomer, must alike be content to find their way to the Father.

Religion, or the knowledge of God, in its Scriptural and saving sense, is, then, an experience, an inward light and feeling, which is strictly personal

to each and every human being; and though it may be aided and helped by external observation, knowledge, instruction, example, and warning, it must be felt at first hand, lived into and found out by experience, before it can be realized in any vital and satisfying way.

Now it is not by any means exclusively true of the knowledge of God, of Christ, of religion, that it is an experience. Even the greatest of facts, the law of gravitation, the rotation of the earth on its axis, the revolution of the earth around the sun, open facts as they now are, continued secrets for ages, until experience had gradually revealed them to brooding minds guessing and feeling their way into the heart of nature. And the most immediate of all facts, lying nearest to our hearts, the circulation of the blood, is a comparatively modern discovery, not known until after the circulation of the planets had been revealed by science. We knew and still know more of the stars, billions of miles away, than of our own palpable and inescapable bodies; for who has yet told us the use of that little organ called the spleen, or who can give us the least insight into the principle of corporal life? Secrets, open secrets, — man and nature are full of them.

But the relation of experience to moral facts and attainments is much closer than to physical facts. All moral knowledge, knowledge of the world, knowledge of life, knowledge of art, all knowledge not of numbers and external facts or of demonstrable and visible things, — and even of these to some extent,

as we have just seen, — is a matter of inward experience. What parent can tell its child what manhood or womanhood is, or what life and the world are? What college graduate could ever give to a boy entering the university he had just left any true or adequate idea of academic life, its intellectual ambitions, its awakening thirsts, its broadening horizon, its social conflicts and satisfactions, its emulations, sympathies, and pleasures, its bitter disappointments, its sharp temptations, its inevitable failures, its intoxicating triumphs? Who that has not felt it can describe that peculiar tie, less and more than natural brotherhood, that binds classmates together, and makes their approbation and sympathy necessary to any full enjoyment of the successes and triumphs of all after life? I have often tried to make clever women and intelligent persons of another kind of training understand it, and have always given up in despair.

What is it that separates the young from the middle-aged, the middle-aged from the old, by impassable gulfs, but their various grades of experience, — experience attempting full intercourse with inexperience, and proving its inability to make its secrets over to those who come after it? No young man, no young woman, can be or can feel themselves to be forty or seventy, by merely reading the confessions of forty and seventy. We must live through all the intervening years to reach the feelings, the experiences, which belong to those who have plodded over that instructive turnpike, counted

off its successive toll-gates, and paid the price of passage, which is never less nor more than so much living on and through them. You cannot guess, you cannot learn from others, any of the secrets which constitute the deepest wealth of all souls. Who can teach, in the sense of communicating, patience, candor, moderation, modest expectations, toleration for others' opinions, fortitude, and superiority to circumstances? These are things which must be learned, but cannot be taught. They can be testified to, they can be suggested, they can be encouraged, they can be lured out of other souls; but they cannot be imparted or handed over from soul to soul, as you hand over the key to a chest or a gate, or an answer to a riddle, or a reply to a question of fact or science. How we have to wait, how we learn, if wise, to wait, for time and experience to teach our children what all our moral lessons, our good examples, our precepts, and our warnings fail to convey to them!

Now we do not consider it anything against the knowledge of the world, or the knowledge of society, or acquaintance with and insight into human character, or skill in our profession or trade or art, that no teaching except that of personal experience and practice can much advance us in our way. Why, then, should we judge it strange that God has necessarily hidden the saving knowledge of himself, the way of life, the clue to peace and salvation, in a personal experience? For certainly it is truer of a satisfying and practical religious

faith and character, and of the hope and charity that accompany them, than of any other knowledge, that they are to be lived into and found out only by inward and personal experience. We may talk about God's presence in the world, in nature, in the sky, in the soul, — of his presence alike in a drop of dew and in the glorious sun, — and prove that, if he were not everywhere with all his infinite attributes at each and every moment, the universe would instantly fall back into its original chaos. And with all the perfect assent we may gain to this sublime proposition, what effect will it have upon any human being compared with the awe and hush that come in some hour of peril, anguish, or guilt, when one deep, piercing thought of what God is, and how near and present he is, comes like a tidal wave out of a calm sea far up the beach that never yet was wet, and leaves its mark and its effects forever?

You may teach your child his prayers, and he shall say them with bended knee and reverent lips, and you shall explain to him how God hears and answers prayers, and he shall heed your counsels, and go to church and join decorously in the service, and be shocked and pained at irreverence in others, — and all the while have hardly yet known what prayer is, until in some profound trial, under some bitter bereavement, in some humiliating or threatening exposure, in some awakening throe of conscience, some shock of the intellect or the will, the theorizer and second-hand saint finds himself overboard and called to swim for his life, — no bladders

under him, no fenced-in swimming-bath around him, no life-boat near,—nothing left but the distant shore and his muscles, courage, and effort to reach it! Then it is, when the soul cries out for the living God, longs and faints for his presence, and in its fierce struggle for life strikes out with its spiritual limbs to reach its shore, that faith is born; that God's spirit comes under the soul, like the bounding, elastic sea beneath the trusting swimmer; that prayer becomes its own interpreter, God his own witness, and the soul its own teacher and way. The secret is out; spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Experience is the inward light, and it will satisfy each soul in its own way. All eyes are not helped in the same way; too much light blinds as certainly as too little, but God puts a taper, a candle, a star, a sun, a heaven of suns, into the souls of his children, just as they need or can bear more or less. The glow-worm's light guides its mate as well as the morning star guides the dawn. Not what *your* soul, but what *my* soul needs,—not what would satisfy you, but what satisfies me,—is the heart's rightful demand; and this is just what religious experience, when it comes, gives to every soul.

If people would only believe in just that little original religious experience which each of them possesses, if they would only trust the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, how soon they would find it increasing and shedding ever more satisfying illumination on their way!

True, it is dim at first, and emits only just light enough for the next step; but who can take more than one step at a time, and what do we need more than room to plant the lifted foot, if only another stepping-place is sure to appear when the dark lantern we carry gets near enough to reveal it?

Do you say that you have no religious experience, no light whatsoever private to yourself, which makes itself felt as shining from a divine source? Ah! I must doubt if the worst or most sin-beclouded soul that ever lived could truly say that. For who has not felt a ray of Heaven's own glory beating in through some chink in his blinded soul, to show him that he is not left wholly alone with the powers of darkness? Who has not felt conscience, that real and literal presence of the indwelling God, warning, reproving, entreating, even in the midst of his most abandoned hours? Who, however careless or reckless, has not had his compunctious moments, his aspirations for virtue and goodness, his visions of purity and innocency? No light, no religious light, in the most thoughtless, wicked, and worldly soul? Believe it not of others; you cannot believe it of yourself. You *must* recall some day of innocence, some hour of reverence, some conscience-smitten moment, some sense of God's presence, some feeling of the dignity and glory of your own nature. Nay, you must have them *now*. There is *no* day, I verily believe, when God does not plead gently at least for one single moment with your heart; no day when some divine suggestion to abandon wilful,

selfish, wicked ways does not tug at your heart and fill you with at least a flitting resolve to be another man, another woman.

Do you need any greater light than the light that one single gleam of such experiences affords, to take the first step out of your gloom and darkness? Were you lost at midnight in a pathless forest, full of thorns and briers, blackness above, beneath, around, and suddenly a faint beam of light should break upon your straining sight, would it not face you straight about, fix your direction, draw you with a cord stronger than steel? Would it not be your probable escape, your salvation from cold, storm, snow, and death? Is it, then, a lesser light than this feeble taper in a distant cottage-window that burns its message from God's own dwelling into your own chilled and darkened soul and shows you your direction and your road home to the Father's house?

Follow the light in your soul. It is of God, it is God; it comes from Him, it leads to Him. It kindles every moment you walk by it. It brightens from a rush-light to a sun; and it is more precious to you as God's own direct guidance, your private, special clue to his presence, than all the lights of all the churches and all the teachers in the world, if these be denied. One word of broken prayer, stammered, interjected in obedience to your own faith and need, is worth to you all the liturgies and prayers that others can offer for you. One step of your own on your own spiritual legs, moral infant as

you are, is a further advance on the journey to heaven than though you were carried a thousand miles in others' arms.

For what you want is personal experience. Can you learn to swim by reading about the art of swimming? Are not three hours in the water worth three years of such teaching? Can you find out anything about the secret of prayer by reading dissertations or catechisms on the subject? Get upon your knees, and gasp, grope, and fight your way to God by actual struggles with the invisible spirit, who will wrestle with you when you grasp his visionary presence, nor leave you without his blessing.

Do you think anybody can tell you who Christ is, in a way to make him the friend and brother of your soul? You must let him into your heart, just as you see him, — disguised, hidden, one feature only seen perhaps; let him in just as you learned to think of him from your mother's lips, or from some Christlike person you have seen, or from some life and character you have read of which made you say, Ah! Christ must have been such a one. You know him now, each and every one of you, better than you think; for when you find, as you must, some one in your soul who seems to be your good angel, a better self, yourself as you would be, — some one whom you keep hidden like your lost child's picture, your mother's miniature, away among the precious things seldom visited, too pure, too sacred, to be often looked at or mixed with your ordinary life, — then it is Christ in you, the hope of

glory, the image of God, and you have only to sit down with him, to bear his presence, to encourage his visit, to see slowly coming out of the obscurity a face so familiar, so sweet, so sacred, so holy, that with Thomas you say, "My Lord and my God!"

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Ah! did we only fear to grieve away the spirit that is ever pleading in our hearts, to quench the faintest ray that shines upon our path to heaven, how soon would religion lose its unreality, its puzzling mystery, its hopeless perplexity! But alas! because it is not sunlight all around, you will not use the candle of the Lord that burns in your own soul. Because you cannot see the path far ahead, you will not walk a step in the already open, though dimly lighted way. You must stop to understand all mysteries, you must settle the question of the Trinity, the doctrine of human nature, your scientific doubts, the modern Positivism, the question of miracles, the difference between the natural and the supernatural. You are studying botany when starving for bread, astronomy when lost for a little candlelight, and the laws of heat while freezing to death. You are speculating, dogmatizing, disputing, denying, fighting with nature, circumstances, your lot, your Maker, and your own soul, while, like a mother with a child in a passion waiting for its reason to return, God is waiting to say, My child, follow the light home, accept the little thread you find already in your hand as the clue out of your labyrinth. It is thin and fine, hardly visible, but it is

enough! Follow your own religious experience, not mine, not Paul's, not Channing's, not Augustine's, not Fénelon's; follow your own. It may not be so good as theirs, but it is your own, you have it in hand. It is perhaps poor, unpromising, will not bear examination by others, and may be of no use to them. You cannot preach it, nor communicate it, nor even talk about it nor describe it. But it is yours, and it is real, and it is enough to begin with, and like a single spark on your hearth in your solitary house, where cold and hunger threaten to starve you, it is the sole means, and a sufficient means, of kindling O how great a fire! and of lighting O how blessed and grand an illumination!

> "Know,
> Without or star or angel for their guide,
> Who worship God shall find him."
>
> "Humble love,
> And not proud reason, keeps the door of heaven;
> Love finds admission where proud science fails."
>
> YOUNG'S *Night Thoughts.*

In an old book of emblems of the fifteenth century, there is a device of the god Love, not blind but winged, and with a pair of dividers in his hands, planting one point firmly on the centre, and, with the other free, preparing to sweep the universe into his circle. Beneath, in Latin, is the legend, "From one fixed point I include all." Is not this a motto for the human soul? We have the starting-place, the centre, the fixed point, in our personal experience,—a mere spark of divine life it may seem; but

the smallest soul has room for that, and from that shining spark the possibilities of infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, infinite gain in piety and truth, submit themselves to our conquest.

Stand, then, on that central spot, your own religious experience; give it not up to any summons; barter it not for any other possession; suspect it not for any challenge of others. But with your soul opening and questful, one foot fixed and one loose and free, step forward, widen the circle of light, conquer the darkness, and finally hope to see as you are seen, to know as you are known, and to have all mysteries lost in fulness of light and love.

XVII.

POETRY IN THE BIBLE, AND ITS PLACE IN RELIGION.

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

ISAIAH xxxiii. 17.

IT would be difficult to describe the effect of that visionary sense which falls upon souls kindled with inward fire, — sometimes known as inspiration, sometimes as prophecy, sometimes as the spirit of song, sometimes as the spirit of divination, or the interpretation of signs and wonders, — in better terms than Isaiah, who knew it so well and illustrated it so sublimely, has done in the words of the text. Touched by this spirit, he says, "Thine eyes shall see the king (that is, the Almighty) in his *beauty:* they shall behold the land that is very far off." It is given only to partakers of this visionary power to see the beauty of the Lord, the beauty of holiness, the beauty of creation. Others see the wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy of God; but these are privileged to see also the beauty of the king, and "they behold the land that is very far off." It is the special purpose and power of the imagination — which is

alike the poetic and the spiritual motor and magnet of the soul — to bring the distant near and to make the unseen visible. *The* land, — the land promised to our longing hearts, the land of true freedom, true joy, true beauty, and true peace, "the land that is very far off" to most souls, — is before the very eyes of those whose vision has been couched by the touch of the all-creating Spirit, the original of the prophet's, the seer's, the singer's, the poet's heart. It is to some account of the high and holy part the *imagination* plays in religion, life, and character, that I ask your attention.

There is no book in all literature in which the poetical spirit and the play of imagination have a larger space or a more various manifestation than in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation it is crowded with pictorial language, alive with dramatic situations, sparkling with images, scented with the myrrh and frankincense of song. Homer does not equal it in simplicity, nor Shakespeare surpass it in richness and variety. It is universal too. Lyric, epic, drama, parable, vision, epigram, proverb, pastoral idyl, — it passes through all the forms of poetry, and is truly great in every one of them. Homely images and sublime analogies are there so finely blended with Nature's and Passion's fusing power that we sometimes feel that the same fires that crystallized the gems, the diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, must have been working in humanity with a power since lost, — in those days when "the sons of God loved the daughters of men," and

the analytic and critical temper had not frozen the springs of inventive and poetic feeling. By what blessed fortune, or rather providence, is it that this great Book, the most catholic in spirit, diversified in form, and rich in substance, has become consecrated and chosen as *the* Book of books? It is as wide as Nature herself; as luxuriantly tangled and incapable of being laid out in prosaic plots, or levelled or pathed, and will forever preserve its refreshing and beautiful wildness. It is impossible to break its rocks down into the macadam of the patent road, or to fell its cedars and palms and leave in place only the farmer's field. No system of doctrine can cover and limit its sublime suggestions, nor prevent new generations from finding new meanings in its symbols. Take away its alleged verbal inspiration, and its source is left as mysterious and divine as ever, and theories of poetry do little to account for its superlative beauty and force. Alas, that superstition, compulsory lessons, the reading of it in school as a mere fetich worship, and strangling theories of verbal inspiration should have succeeded in making the Bible dull, meaningless, and unattractive to so many! I shall not wonder if many think I am talking only the language of pulpit and professional custom as I thus speak of it. But I beg those of my hearers who have any habit of reading the other great books in the world's literature, Homer or Virgil, Dante or Milton, to open their Old Testaments with fresh eyes and read without prepossession, if

they can, any consecutive twenty pages, and say that they have not encountered touches of nature, figures of splendor, narratives of exquisite simplicity, truths sublime and eternal, illustrated with a boldness or a beauty which can only be paralleled, if anywhere, in the writings of the confessed miracles of time, the great master poets of all ages.

Turn the pages of the Pentateuch, and read its wondrous poem of creation, — be it guess, or be it inspiration, one of the sublimest efforts of the imagination of man to grasp the great mystery of cosmogony. Sit with the patriarchs under their tents or their fig-trees, and breathe a pastoral freshness such as Theocritus or Virgil never knew. Journey with Abraham and see him entertain angels, and watch the pathetic simplicity of Isaac's prepared and divinely interrupted sacrifice. Follow Hagar and Ishmael into the banishment into which Sarah's natural jealousy has driven them, out of Abraham's relucting but obedient heart and from his generous home. Start with the little Moses in the bulrushes of the Nile, watched by his mother's anxious eyes, and soon nestled in the bosom of a Pharaoh's daughter, and follow him through his princely nurture until the day when his Hebrew blood begins to boil and he rises a leader and deliverer. Follow him across the divided sea and the wilderness to the heights of Sinai, and hear the announcement of that Law which, whether due to his moral genius or to special inspiration, has made him the legislator of legislators, before whom

Solon, Lycurgus, Justinian, would bend their heads. Study the majestic structure of his creation of a nation that still endures, with its background of thunder and cloud, of wonders and signs, and its text lucid, practical, definite, and humane; and then watch him dying on Mount Nebo alone, forsaken, with his glazing eyes full upon the promised land he must not enter

But do not forget that first of Arabian tales, the dramatic story of Joseph and his brethren; and if your eyes are not seared, you must weep at its exquisite pathos. Have you forgotten the career of Joshua and the fall of Jericho; the Hamlet-like interlude of Ehud and Eglon; Gideon's fleece,— rival of the golden one; Jotham's parable of the trees choosing a king, and the instructive satire of the bramble being preferred above the vine, the olive, and the fig; the Iphigenian parallel of Jephtha's rash vow; the trumpet tones of Deborah's song; Samson, the Hercules of the Scriptures; the lovely pastoral of Ruth and the love of Naomi; or that most exquisite of baby tales, the little Samuel's birth and his mother's mixing her pride and her piety, her tailoring and her worship, together in a fashion that still happily and innocently continues?

If you love tragedy, read the story of Saul the son of Kish, and follow him from his hunt for his father's asses to the spot where Samuel anoints him king as the goodliest among the sons of Israel; see his great struggling nature contend with his fears

and his hopes, his superstition and his piety, his simplicity and his ambition; the rise of David, and his friendship with Saul's son Jonathan, that passed the love of women; Saul's mingled love and hatred for the young hero who had made his shepherd's sling stronger than a giant's spear and a lion's paw; David's magnanimity when his great enemy's life was in his hand; Saul's interview with the witch of Endor, and his suicide; David's lament over Saul and Jonathan; the whole story of Abner and Joab; of David's guilt in the case of Uriah's wife, and Nathan's parable that brought him to a sense of it; the dazzling account of Absalom's beauty, the Jewish Antinous, and his father's idolatry for his princely son; Absalom's conspiracy against his doting father, his own death at Joab's stern hand, and David's pathetic mourning for him; the stately history of the magnificence of Solomon's reign,—his commerce, his architecture, and his luxurious ways, in which wisdom and self-indulgence, knowledge of the world and cynicism, were so curiously blended; Elijah's noble history and visible ascent in a fiery chariot to heaven; Elisha's appearance; Josiah's youthful reign; Ezra and Nehemiah's prudent and reconstructive statesmanship; the dramatic interlude of Esther; and then the mighty poem of Job, anticipating the great question that still tortures the human heart,—of the origin and nature of evil, and the mystery of a Providence under which injustice and wrong prosper, and innocence and virtue are often allowed to be made their

victims. I need only name the Psalms of David to recall the memory of a hundred poems that have fed the religious hopes, soothed the sorrows, and winged the prayers of the lofty and lowly from their origin to this hour, — never more prized than now. Time would fail me to make more than mention of Isaiah's exalted strains, or Jeremiah's melting lamentations; of Ezekiel's bold visions; of Daniel in the lion's den, or interpreting the king's dream; of Belshazzar's feast, that tasked and baffled the genius of our greatest painter, Alston.

The New Testament begins in the lovely story of the birth of Jesus and John, with Mary's and Elizabeth's friendship, and has furnished the inspiration of the greatest of the world's artists. Raphael, surrounded by a whole school of almost equal painters, who have made the Madonna and Child, the flight into Egypt, the relations of John and Jesus, the miracles of Christ, and the affecting situations in his life, with the tragic beauty of his death, ceaseless subjects of their almost inspired pencils. Jesus was a poet himself. He saw things in pictures, he taught by poems, — we call them parables, — as uninspired men like Æsop and La Fontaine have done before and since in ways not more poetical. What in literature can surpass the poetic beauty of Jesus' story of the prodigal son? And what mystic poetic light mingles with his conversations recorded in John, which are utterly unintelligible if read in a dull, prosaic temper. Paul, too, is a poet. Compare him with Peter, more ardent,

James, more ethical, and see how the enthusiasm of the poet shapes every act of his life and colors every word of his mouth. Things acted themselves in his thoughts, until heaven and earth were met in one tremendous drama, and all events in Jewish history were bound in one epic chain to the past, and then to the throne of God, by the central figure of his divine master. He melts down the literal histories of the evangelists in his glowing soul, and runs the whole metal over in his shaping imagination. No man ever turned the fortunes of his race by the power of his spiritual fancy so much as the apostle Paul; he gave wings to the cross and set it in the universal sky by the soaring faith of his lofty imagination. And to end all, the book of Revelation! what a hold it has taken on the feelings of mankind by its bold figures and mysterious pictures so full of food for fancy, fear, and hope?

If any one wishes to trace the influence of the Bible as a whole upon successive generations, its ever-increasing popularity and unrelaxing grasp upon our race, he will find it, not in what is most resolvable into terms of fact and forms of logic, in direct and definite history, or ethical rules, or systematic divinity, but in its eternal ministry to the more profound wants of our nature, in arousing and feeding moral confidence and spiritual anticipations or aspirations, in the power it possesses to awaken the sense of the morally sublime and the beautiful, and to bring imagination and fancy under the shelter and sanction of religion. Faith is the

poetry of the common human heart; imagination is the wing that it lifts: it is the mirror that reflects heaven; it is the magic-lantern that fills the dark chamber of the soul with moving pictures in place of unaffecting ideas. The Bible is a perpetual appeal to faith, which cannot breathe in a stifling prosaic atmosphere. It is an everlasting panorama of pictures, from the garden of Eden to the garden of Gethsemane, and the world is perpetually occupied with spelling out their meaning, — too deep to be always plain, or rather deepens to be always fresh and capable of varied interpretations; never enslaving, because elastic and woven of human passion, and therefore fitting, as real poetry, real art ever does, all time, though in differing ways. The Bible, though neglected at epochs, is the most readable book in literature, because every age and time finds in its rich and inexhaustible poetry what meets every degree of development and every stage of civilization. It is not too much to say that it embraces verses and stories better suited to children than the Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, Sandford and Merton, or Miss Edgeworth's Tales, and fuller of lasting charm, though equally built upon the poetic sense or dramatic instinct. I cannot conceive of any stage of life above the barbaric in which the stories of the ewe lamb, the prodigal son, Ruth and Naomi, or Samuel's history, or the birth, daily life, and fate of Jesus would not be intensely interesting, if only we could get rid of our fatal familiarity with them.

In short, that happens with the Bible which happens with nature and life. They lose their charm, variety, significance, and power to instruct and move us, only because our eye of wonder, our imagination, our sensibility to beauty and truth, get dull with use and custom. Have the stars exhausted their mystery and glory? or is it only we who have put out our eyes for their beauty and wonder, by fastening our vision upon meaner objects all far short of their divine excellency? There is no loss in life that compares in grievousness with the loss of *wonder*. It is the blessed sensibility of the soul to the touch of that heavenly mystery that enshrines us, and makes life to those who retain this openness to the last, a perpetual presence-chamber of God's spirit, hung with all the symbols and insignia of his glory, might, and goodness.

It is a curious fact that notwithstanding the extraordinary place that poetry has in the Bible, *imagination*, which is its very fountain and vehicle, is never spoken of, nor the word ever used in the Scriptures, except in an opprobrious sense. "The people imagine a vain thing." "All the imaginations of their heart are evil continually." The word seems to be commonly used as if imagination were opposed to reality and fact. To *imagine* is ever to conceive something false and opposed to truth and goodness. It is easy enough to see how this happens. When the race is at its most poetic eras, it is least conscious of the existence and play of the poetic or imaginative faculty. Poetry is not even

called poetry, or known to be poetry, when it is most real and influential. Springing then from real passion and true intuition, from profound unforced sympathy with nature or childlike exuberance of feeling, it is not recognized as an art, or felt to be either difficult or admirable. Verse itself, which is by no means essential to, much less identical with, poetry, although very early chosen as its vesture, was not at first, we may believe, adopted for its beauty, but for its helpfulness to the memory when the memory was the librarian of historic facts and writing was a rare and costly art.

For poetry is at its root a feeling, not an expression. It exists in all hearts, and is specially active in children, who do not even suspect its existence. It is indeed a necessary and inextinguishable property and function of the soul, and pours its chief volume into the silent or acted life of humanity, not into its written or spoken word. Every child is a poet as he calls up and pictures his future career, imagines himself at the public school, in the college, engaged in the real business of life, — a hero, a discoverer, a sailor, soldier, inventor, patriot, or martyr! Every lover is a poet, clothing the object of preference with qualities woven in the loom of fancy. Every mother crowns her child with an aureole that makes it exceptionally beautiful and precious; but it borrows its splendor from her imagination, kindled by her heart. There is no business which does not owe its interest and even possibility to the shaping power of the imagination,

which first frames a picture of the relation of means to ends, of risks to prizes and losses; and finally incarnates in form and substance plans and projects that first exist only in the ideas of the mind, shaped into pictures and lighted up with hope and faith. Every high pleasure in life wins its charm from sentiment, and sentiment is the mixture of poetry with feeling. How seldom is anything enjoyed for its naked self! There is an atmosphere about our friends and companions, an indefinite significance and suggestiveness, that make the joy of our intercourse with them very little dependent on what is said and done. If we should attempt to reduce to prosaic arithmetic the value of looks, gestures, motions, manners, fancies, we should find our social and domestic entertainments exhibiting a desperate want of substance and bottom, — trading on a great scale on a most insignificant capital. I defy any one to defend, on mere utilitarian grounds, the existence of the customs, the civilities, the etiquette, the social or domestic life of humanity. But they are none the less real for that. Things are not what they seem! Were there not an immense eking out of all defects and all inutilities by the play of sentiment, fancy, imagination; were not the prose of life lined with poetry and all its creaking joints oiled with feeling, all that is crooked straightened by faith and hope, — we should find life intolerable or disgusting. It is not what we eat and drink that makes even our daily meals satisfying, but the faces of our household, the sacredness of our

domestic privacy, the confidence and faith of those who share our food with us. "Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." Take away the poetry from the day-laborer's heart, which his religious faith, or his patriotic pride, or his national songs, or his recollection of his last holiday, or his hope of his next, or his secret meditation on some woman's love, — his mother, his sweetheart, his wife, his growing daughter, — and you would see him sinking under his hod or fainting at the plough-tail.

What makes the meaning and strength of our daily salutations? what the significance of the symbols of nationality, of Christianity, of masonic orders, of secret societies, of military colors? The cross is but a couple of sticks fixed at right angles; the flag, strips of colored bunting; the ordinary greeting, a senseless pulling of hands or doffing of hats; the smile, a contortion of the facial fibres; a kiss, a pair of puckered lips pressed against the covering of the muscles that work the jaws! Only this — *and* the poetry! This, and what imagination and feeling do for them! Ah! it is the invisible breath from within that builds and shapes the bubble that reflects the iris hues of the sun. As color is not a physical, but a mental phenomenon, so all that sweetens, elevates, and refines life comes from the poetry of the heart and soul.

And when we come to religion, we shall be obliged to confess, nay, to own with joy, that it is the permanent form of that poetry which the Great

Original Poet, the Creator, invented and made his human offspring partakers in. It is not irreverent, nay, it is eminently pious, to call God the first, the last, and the Eternal Poet. What so rhythmic, so full of unuttered because ineffable meaning, so crowded with holy mystery, so shining with beauty, so charged with emotion, so aglow with sentiment, as his universe? Why, the heavens alone, with their burning orbs moving in marshalled constellations, are an eternal poem, before whose beauty mere human minstrels feel that their best fires are pale and their creations worthless ashes. God invented those Seasons which Thompson has immortalized himself by merely describing. He made those faculties, that reason, that imagination and fancy, those affections and passions which merely to describe or fitly to move and touch, makes Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, illustrious and divine! Think of the poetry of Spring, of the common April in Nature and in the opening soul, and call God no poet! Why, the tragedy of the dying year and the more sublime tragedy of death for every human creature are themselves the source and inspiration of all great poetry. The sublime daring of death, interposed in the life of the soul as its most imaginative and terror-breeding factor, is the greatest stroke of poetry in the universe, if that place be not rather reserved for that wondrous passion of Love, the very conception of which is the sublimest and tenderest claim the Almighty makes upon the admiration of his creat-

ures. That passion or sentiment makes all men poets; the coarsest are momentarily softened and refined, the most selfish subdued to generosity, the insensible touched with ecstasy, while under its dominion. What, then, must be the depth of poetry in the fountain from which all this perennial and ever-beautiful stream is known to flow?

The world will strive in vain with its logic and science to make God out a mere geometer or grand philosopher. He is, above all, the poet. Geometers measure, but do not make, worlds; philosophers analyze and describe, but do not originate, faculties. There is passion, feeling, imagination, poetry, life, at the centre of a universe, of which these glowing worlds above, this beauteous world below, are persistent factors. This exquisite collocation of woods and waves, of rocks and grasses and flowers, of mountains and plains, with the dawn and sunset, the rainbow and the aurora; celestial constellations that sing as they shine, and terrestrial pictures that melt and awe and charm the soul as with music,— these are not accidents, nor could they have come from any Being whose heart was not full of beauty. And it will be equally in vain to attempt to feed the soul on a mere ethical faith, a faith without mystery or room for imagination or play of passion. The death of Jesus is well called "the passion;" and the life of God is a holy passion too. He who strives to eliminate from his religious faith all sentiment, all symbols, all passionate feeling, all mystic faith, on the theory that he is thus making it nearer

the truth, more rational, more tolerable, and more wholesome, is trying a fatal experiment upon his own nature, and flying in the face of all human experience and all divine example. The imagination is an eternal part of the reason. It may be doubted whether God reasons; because he is, and knows, and is at the end and beginning of reason. But that he puts suggestion, imagination, poetry, into his every work, and makes it unintelligible without a corresponding play of imagination and feeling in his rational offspring, is very certain. Because the Bible calls poetry by the names of Faith, Hope, or Charity, it does not prove these graces less poetical or less divine. Faith is always a poetic or an imaginative act. It begins where logic or mere reasoning ends; but it does not leave Reason behind; and Reason does not refuse to go with it when she is most herself. Hope is just as poetic in its origin and method as Faith. It does not spin its cords out of nothing, but only out of unseen and immaterial stuff, — the immortal substance of faith. Charity is not the mere justice we do to merit, it is not the fair equivalent we pay for service; it is the soul's largess, the sunshine that rests on the evil and the good, in the heart that has caught the secret of the divine generosity. Duty herself is none other than the stern daughter of the Voice of God, beautiful in her severity, and blazing with a white light that refuses to mix opalescent rays with its diamond purity. But who that weighs his duty in the grocer's scales, who that does not feel that he owes

all he has and is to the service of each and every man, and that Duty is but the moral side of Love, and shares her beauty and poetic origin, ever understands the real well-head of morality, or the secret of the oneness of the two great commandments?

To grow out of the charm of poetry in life or religion, in home, business, politics, or benevolence, in manners, customs, beliefs, — is to grow narrow, hard, coarse, blind, and deaf. Preserve, if you can, your wonder, your sacred awe and holy fear, your faculty of hope, your visionary flower of faith, your sense of the great fact that "the things that are seen are temporal, the things that are not seen are eternal." Religion is still the chief fortress of the poetry of life; for it stands by the doctrine of faith, and it maintains the reality of things invisible. It is the nurse, if it be not the child, of Imagination, the divinest part of Reason. Dare not to think lightly of that faculty, for by it you are partakers of the Divine Nature. If God made the world out of nothing, then imagination went before creation. At any rate, he has left us to make the future world by the power by which he made the present and all worlds. Imagination is the secular name for *faith;* and it is not the name for fancy, or make-believe, or capricious play of thought and feeling, but the name for the deepest glimpses we have or make into spiritual reality. The Bible employs it, nay, was written by it. It is, like the poet himself, "of imagination all compact," and those who do not bring imagination to its

reception and comprehension can never interpret it. All prayer is the exercise of a spiritual imagination which realizes the Divine Presence by faith. Our first-hand views of spiritual things are peeps through the rifts which our religious imaginations make in the clouds the senses raise twixt earth and heaven. Be rational enough to justify the place which faith and feeling, imagination and poetry, have in your nature and your religion, and you may hope to escape the chill and frost which gather round a piety that is stripped of its heaven-woven garments.

XVIII.

THE GLORY OF DOCTRINE ITS TENDENCY TO PRODUCE HOLY LIVING.

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 11.

THUS tenderly, yet boldly, Paul speaks of the glory of the Mosaic Law while it lasted, and of the greater glory of the Gospel of Christ which it had prepared for, and had already in his convictions been superseded by. It had been the schoolmaster to bring the world to Christ. It was glorious in its time and for its ends, as the primary school is glorious while it is rearing children for the academy, and the academy while it is preparing youth for the college; as the cocoon is glorious as the cradle of the butterfly; the bud as the hiding-place and nurse of the flower; the blossom as the promise and condition of the fruit. Everything is glorious in its time. Means are glorious; but the ends they promote are more glorious. The letter is glorious if it duly symbolizes the spirit; but the spirit is more glorious: for the letter killeth when it is mistaken for the spirit, which alone liveth and maketh

alive. The spirit makes the letter alive while the letter is able to contain it and to allow its life to manifest itself, as the chrysalis is alive while the insect continues in it. It is only dead when the worm has burst from it and become more glorious in the butterfly; though that which is now done away was glorious too as its shelter, so long as it was needed and used.

The Mosaic Law was done away when Christ appeared and had completed his personal ministry; but only formally. Really it continued to exert a tremendous power over the ideas and feelings of Christians; nor have we got rid of its influence to this day. It was done away only as slavery was done away by the proclamation of the President; its influence remaining and promising to remain for generations in the ideas, customs, tastes, and feelings of those who had for more than a century lived in its shadow. And this is the slow method in which all things provisional, partial, and imperfect, or capable of being improved upon, are done away in the world. Nature abhors leaps in her order; and the human mind and heart abhor them just as much. Reformation, and not revolution, is the process by which the wisest and best ends are accomplished. The sober and unselfish reformer does not cut himself off from the past, and denounce it as wholly false, in order to commend the present with its more glorious spirit or clearer truth. He endeavors to develop the new out of the old; he stands with his face to the future and his back upon the past,

leaning solidly against it, but looking hopefully forward; accepting the aid of the past to fashion the future; honoring the past and seeking its warrant for progress in its prophecy of its own dissolution into a higher life. The past is not a lie, a mistake, an enemy. It held in its opinions, customs, faiths, the seeds of the future. If we could really destroy it, we should kill the future too; as we should destroy the coming spring if we burnt over the grasses and bushes and trees because they had become brown and sear.

Among the things that are ever changing, yet ever connected, are opinions. Now opinions are always provisional; they are the accounts which men are able to give of what they see, believe, or feel in that part of their experience which does not fall within the sphere of the exact sciences. Opinion is not knowledge, but truth in the making. Men do not have opinions in our day about the multiplication-table, or about anything else capable of being definitely demonstrated. It is not a matter of opinion whether London or Paris exists; but it is a matter of opinion whether they are desirable places of residence, or which of the two cities shows the truer civilization. True, one man's opinion on this subject cannot be said to be as good as another's, because a person travelled, cultivated, a student of history and society, of art and life, would have a thousandfold the competency to give a sound opinion upon the question of the relative character and quality of these two communities that he would

have who spoke from a limited observation, a poor education, and small reflection. But, after all, it would remain a matter of opinion; and even equally competent observers might have honest and weighty reasons for coming to different opinions about it as each, by temperament, taste, or opportunity, had reasons for emphasizing one or another portion of the testimony. There would be honest, unconscious, and inescapable prejudices and partialities in the judgment of both. Each would have things to say which it would be highly important for the other to consider, though it is rare that we are able to give a due weight to considerations urged by those from whom we differ seriously. To overcome this force of prejudice is the labor of all highly truth-loving minds.

Thus, in matters of opinion it is often assumed that two disputants cannot both be entitled to respect; that if we fraternize with one, we must quarrel with the other; that one must be wholly right, and the other wholly wrong. Whereas, on the contrary, it is very easy for both to be wrong in part, and both right in part; while it is certain that so long as a thing continues only a matter of opinion, neither is likely to be absolutely right. In matters of pure fact or pure mathematics, or in things capable of demonstration, there comes a time when things that were once matters of opinion become matters of science, — that is, of proved knowledge; and then the ignorant and the wise, those acquainted with the facts and those not, are

in the position of the wholly right and the wholly mistaken. It was once a matter of opinion whether the earth was flat or round; it is no longer such, its roundness being a matter of demonstrated fact. Whether the earth went round the sun, or the sun round the earth, was long a matter of opinion; it is no longer such.

Now in respect of theological or religious opinions, it is important to remember that in the very nature of things, dealing with the most profound and mysterious subjects, they are, in proportion as they concern what is recondite and ultimate, always tentative, approximative, provisional. It is doubtless impossible to define, in any way that cannot be challenged, the nature of God, the exact place of Christ, the influence of hereditary taint, the limits to the freedom of the human will, the meaning of the words "eternal" or "everlasting" when applied to future punishment. Opinion on these subjects has varied with races, regions, temperaments, culture, sects, ages. Language itself is so loose and yielding a net for ideas that words continue in use and authority after the original meanings they were adopted to carry have unconsciously oozed out of them, and men mistakenly suppose themselves to be of the opinions of their fathers, of a couple of hundred or a thousand years ago, because they still use the verbal propositions their ancestors framed to suggest or symbolize their own opinions. The old well-sweep stands respected, and the symbol of the supply of water to the family, long after the

well has given place to an aqueduct that empties into the basin of every chamber in the house.

All scholars know the immense difficulty connected with the definition of such words as "revelation" and "inspiration." Men may use them with equal sincerity who have theories of revelation and inspiration of the most diverse character. Thus theologians of the most orthodox phraseology exist who nevertheless consider revelation to be a permanent, orderly, and continuous function of the Eternal Mind, which began with creation and still continues; and inspiration just as permanent, orderly, and continuous, — a fact describing the influence of the mind of the Eternal Spirit upon the spirits of his children when, self-seeking and personal ends set aside, they hearken only to his voice in their hearts. Now is a man of these views easily intelligible to one who uses the words in the mechanical sense of the old theologians, — as meaning strictly direct, abnormal interposition? And yet will the first give up the words "revelation" and "inspiration," or ought he to do it, when in his conviction his definition is the truer, the worthier of God, and the more compatible with the contents of the Bible? Is it not true that the thinking people, who know the depth of the difficulties connected with the higher problems, are the truly tolerant ones? the ones who neither overvalue their own opinions, nor needlessly underrate, much less press to their logical consequences, the opinions of others when associated with purity of Christian life and character?

Is it not strange that opinions about the constitution of the Godhead and the pre-existence of Jesus — questions admitting of endless debate, and which probably our present powers are inadequate to answer; on which the wisest and holiest men have or can have only approximate nearness to the actual truth — should have torn the Christian church in pieces, and sowed dragon's teeth in all communities? Why should not the importance of personal piety, the worth of virtue, the obligations of truth, purity, charity, the active service of humanity, growth in holiness, — on which there is a substantial agreement among Christians of all theological shades of opinion, — supersede these themes, which ought to be consigned to the professor's chair in the theological review: themes deeply interesting to the speculative understanding, but not bearing upon the actual character of men, or capable of any positive settlement?

But I hear some one ask, Is there no practical connection between doctrines and character? between theological conclusions and righteous living? Is not opinion important? Are we to put a boneless sentiment in place of a dogmatic faith? a nerveless morality? Must not opinion underlie practice, as the sciences underlie the useful arts? Certainly let us have opinions, and strive for correct ones; but opinions about the divine character are vastly more within our reach than opinions about the divine nature; doctrines of Christ's spirit, precepts, promises, warnings, than doctrines about his onto-

logical essence and origin. I want to see the doctrine of a pure and righteous life considered of more immediate and permanent importance than the doctrine of the Fall. How man became what he is, — an infirm, tempted, exposed being, — seems to me of very little importance compared with the inquiry how we can fortify him in the love of goodness, the dread of wickedness, the practice of virtue, and the avoidance of vice. I want a sound doctrine of Christ preached; but that doctrine is Christ himself as he was in his life and temper, — his disinterestedness and gracious sweetness and never-wearied love. Let Christ be brought before men closely and unweariedly; keep him ever in their thoughts, to win by his sublime yet tender graces, to illuminate by his holy light, to warn by his awful dread of sin: but do not permit such a doctrine as this to give place to discussions about his nature, when we have not yet been able to make a fair beginning in understanding our own. It will be time when we have fathomed human nature to begin to probe Christ's and God's.

We greatly need a renewal of doctrinal preaching; but it is a preaching of doctrines that really touch life and character and are within the reach of our powers, — a doctrine of holy living, a doctrine of justice to those who differ with us in opinion, a doctrine of love for our enemies and how practically to express it, a doctrine of family purity, a doctrine of heaven on earth, a doctrine of immortality begun here, a doctrine of Christ in us here and

now, and conforming us to his image more and more, so that all men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. We want a doctrine of God's fatherhood justified against the appearances of partiality, neglect, inequality, and non-intervention in the condition of men. We want God's ways in this world vindicated with candor and vigor by the principles of justice and of fatherhood implanted in our own nature. We want the essential spirituality of our being and its prospects of surviving the grave asserted and maintained against the doubts and denials of pseudo-science. We want the momentous claims of essential morality pressed with all earnestness, and the issues of moral life and death duly exhibited. How it would lift us all out of our dogmatical sloughs and above our wretched sectarian fences to have the ministry of reconciliation universally preached upon a plain platform of urgent, practical duty, avoiding strifes of words and questions too high for us, and grappling with evils and with hopes within our reach and compass!

And I believe that good time has partly come, and is coming with ever-increasing swiftness. I would not speak slightingly of the creeds of the past or the present, as though they had not had sufficient cause for their existence. It must never be forgotten by those who have abandoned even the doctrine of the Trinity, what a serious office it had to perform in the ages when it was fashioned, and how vast an improvement it was then on the theories of the divine nature entertained by the philosophic

Greeks and Alexandrians. It embalmed itself in the reverence of seventeen centuries by its early services to the Christian world, and it will not be for a good while yet dismissed from duty. It was glorious while it remained, — nay, doubtless is glorious still for those who can honestly receive it still; but after that and all that grows out of it shall have been done away, there will remain, for us, at least, the much more glorious doctrine of the essential and undivided Unity of God

Negations, though necessary in their season, are always temporary and fleeting. The growing tree must shed its bark, the confined kernel its shell, the entombed and swelling grub its chrysalis; these negations are the conditions of future growth. But if the sap did not affirm itself in new growth, if the kernel did not strike its roots down and its shoot upward, if the grub did not develop and use its wings, what would all the negative work of shedding rind or husk or cocoon come to? What does a man who denies the Trinity, the deity of Christ, eternal punishment, total depravity, sudden conversion, and stops there, gain by his negations? Why has he denied these, except to favor nobler thoughts of God, more affecting and rational views of Christ, worthier and more inspiring conceptions of his own nature, a more elevating devotion, and a more comprehensive morality? But if he does not go forward to keep this nobler conception of God's justice, holiness, and fatherhood in his daily thoughts; if he does not make Christ more and more the companion

of his inmost feelings and motives; if he does not exhibit the new honor in which he holds his nature by a more active service to humanity; if he does not show himself more convincingly pure, holy, aspiring, devout, in his whole life and character, — where is the greater glory of that which remains, after the glory of what was useful and glorious in its time has been done away? Surely a growing acorn is better than a dead oak, as a live dog is better than a dead lion; a man deriving real motive, inspiration, and support from mediæval theology, than a man deriving no life, no inspiration, no enthusiasm from to-day's interpretation of Christianity. Nay, a good Jew, full of stiff prejudices in a faith that had produced noble saints in its time, was far dearer to our Saviour than a lukewarm, unaffirmative convert to the Gospel who confined his zeal to assailing the Law without doing aught to illustrate the new and nobler faith.

I remember with shame how much more earnest our laymen were in religious matters when they had a vigorous orthodoxy to thrust aside and throw off, than now when, that work having been essentially done, they have only to exhibit their activity in a positive devotion to a nobler, sweeter Christian life. The negative work of destruction, breaking chains, resisting bigotry, quelling superstition, disproving irrational dogmas, they enjoyed. They gave time, money, heart to it, and they did it effectually and nobly, and with great advantage to themselves and others. But when it came to showing their zeal, fidelity,

devotion to the new ideas and convictions which they had made room for; to cultivating the higher piety which a more glorious conception of God had made possible, or the virtue and morality, the zeal for justice and truth, which were now to be expected from their wider, purer, freer conceptions of Christ and the future destiny of man,—I confess that I have as yet seen very little to prove that, negation being done with, affirmation has yet to any considerable extent taken its place.

We look about for reasons why the cause of Liberal Christianity does not advance faster. It is not on account of any mistaken views of policy; it is not because of its unsettled dogmatic condition, its want of definiteness, its divisions of sentiment. It is for a deeper cause, — its want of affirmative life in the souls of its disciples. It is the want of religious aspiration, positive faith, profound interest in Christian truth and goodness; the want of vital piety of the kind we recognize as vital,—of earnestness and self-sacrifice in furtherance of ends we acknowledge as important and sacred, and worth any pains we can put forth to obtain them. Let a man affirm his love of God by vigorous conformity of his heart, will, life, to the divine character he has so much clarified and heightened by his new theology. Let more of God's character appear in his daily conversation, more of his presence shine out in his face and manner of living at home, in the exchange or the shop, and nobody will escape the converting and inspiring influence of such a man's walk. Let

Christ manifestly reign in his temper, his conduct, his dealings, his conversation, in his subordination of show to substance, of pleasure to duty, of inclination to conscience, of self-indulgence to self-control, — and will anybody doubt that the humanity of Jesus has produced in him its positive fruits and shown its power to effect a noble reform such as any mere scholastic or mysterious idea of him had failed to produce, at least in his life?

It is not whether a man rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment, but whether he proves that the love of moral and spiritual excellency has been able to produce a greater carefulness in his daily life than the fear of hell-fire had wrought in some others. If dread of hell-torments or hope of heavenly rewards works a carefulness, a devotion to duty, a horror of sin, that more spiritual and rational ideas of retribution fail to inspire, it is clear enough that it is a misfortune in him who profited by the Old Law to enter into the New Gospel which he is not prepared to draw any spiritual profit from. If we cannot rear purer, better, more devoted, and holier characters on our system than on that we have discarded, the sooner we fall back into the former state, the safer and better. It is better to be a good scholar in a lower class than a poor one in a higher. The old cannot be wisely done away until the new can live and thrive.

Would you make your faith and principles glorious, you must live them out with earnestness; you must ponder, apply, and realize them in action;

you must show that the *power* of the Gospel has passed into your hands with all its responsibilities. Thank God for what is effective, fruit-bearing, zealous, in the old faith that has lost power in your own minds and hearts. But if you mean to have your own freer, broader faith flourish, and to make what remains more glorious than what is done away, look to it that you put it into vigorous, self-sacrificing, earnest, and continuous action; into a holier living than you see practised by those you most respect of other faiths; into a more affirmative form than the most affirmative convictions assume in other bodies of Christians. This alone will make you live and grow and cover the land. This alone ought to give you influence and increase. Until you are prepared to exhibit these positive fruits of a nobler faith, your churches, your organizations, your conferences, your homes, your lives, will want all that is most inspiring, most converting, and most authoritative in faith and spirituality.

XIX.

JESUS CHRIST, HIS NATURE AND CLAIMS.

Whom do men say that I the son of man am?

MATTHEW xvi. 13.

THIS is a question that Jesus asked in his own lifetime of his immediate disciples again and again; and the answer that he got and which he accepted, and by his silence or his acquiescence, nay, by his full indorsement, gave the final authority to, was this, — "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God."

Now who was the Christ? The Christ was the expected Messiah, the Anointed One, whom Jewish prophets had darkly foretold, a being who was to be raised up from human lineage, of the stock of David, and was to restore the glory of the house of Israel. He was to be a king and a conqueror, whose reign should subdue all opposition, introduce righteousness and peace, convert the nations, and establish the permanent and transcendent kingdom of God on earth in the form of a great Israelitish empire. He was to be the son of God; but in no other sense than Abraham, Moses, and David were sons of God, and as all obedient souls are children

of God, except in so far as his faithfulness and goodness drew upon him a more marked and characteristic proof of God's approval and acceptance. Not a distinct word is breathed in the Old Testament of his supernatural birth, not a syllable of his pre-existence or of his Godhead, much less of his being the second person in a divine Trinity. All these ideas would have been shocking to the Jews, to whom the unity of God and his incommunicable and unshared divinity were truths held with absolute and awful conviction. That the coming of the expected Messiah should be the descent to earth of God himself in human form would have been a blasphemous hypothesis, repugnant to their notions of his invisibility and to their horror of representing him in any palpable image. The apostles, who were Jews, shared, as Jesus himself shared, this profound national feeling; and there is no evidence that at any time during his life it ever occurred to any apostle that Jesus was God himself, or that it was ever intimated by Jesus that he thought himself to be the God of the Jews and a proper object of supreme worship. The most he ever claimed, and the highest dignity ever assigned to him by his apostles in his lifetime, is that he was the Messiah and the son of God.

But what did Jesus mean by claiming to be the Messiah? Certainly he did not meet in any literal way, in any way to support and justify them, the predictions of the Jewish prophets and the expectations of the Jewish people. They rejected him for

this very reason. Not one of their priests or learned men saw in him anything that they had been carefully reared to look for among the signs and proofs of their Messiah. Even his birth from Mary without a natural father, however true it may have been, was no part of Jesus' own pretensions, no part of his preaching, no ground of his appeal to respect and confidence. Thirty or forty years after his death, when the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were perhaps issued, this claim was set up, possibly truly, but in genealogies that have never been, and can never be, fairly made to agree with each other. Paul's Epistles, written before the Gospels, and unquestionably genuine, have not a word to say about Jesus' origin by a miraculous generation. He himself never claims it, and the passages that recite it are at least of uncertain authenticity. There is nothing in the intercourse of the disciples with him to indicate that they felt themselves in the presence of a disguised or shrouded god. They felt his moral and spiritual superiority with unquestioned and affecting awe; but his deity, had it been seen or surmised, must have produced very different emotions and very different behavior from any we notice in them. It is not necessary to assume that they *must* have known it if he *had* been the second person in the Trinity; for if we adopt the theory of a providential blindness imposed upon them, and of the slow development of God's plan, we may even go so far as to suspect that Jesus himself did not know who he himself

was, further than that he was the Messiah. I do not adopt this notion, but it is not wholly untenable. It is enough now to say that the apostles in his lifetime did not know or suspect Jesus to be a deity, and equal with the Almighty.

But did Jesus mean to declare his own assent to the Jewish notion of the Messiah, and to propose himself as and claim to be the Messiah in what was the fair interpretation of the prophecies? I think the Church has greatly magnified the definiteness of the prophetic spirit of the Old Testament, and given a system and form of its own to the scattered and incoherent longings and yearnings of noble Jewish hearts for a national deliverer. The foundation of the hope lay in the depths of that glorious hopefulness of better things, of fairer days, of more realized conceptions of human worth, of national peace and glory, and of God's kingdom, which, thank Heaven, has never wholly expired among any people. Two equal tendencies characterize our nature, — to look backward to a paradise that has been, and forward to a paradise that shall be; to an ideal that has been already somewhere attained, and to a lost ideal that shall again be recovered. The golden age has been behind all peoples, ennobling their ancestors and progenitors; and far before them too, encouraging their future and destined to bless their children's children. Every natural expression in the poetry or piety of Jewish literature exhibiting this longing, whether it described a good ruler, a deliverer from present oppressors, a revival

of neglected worship, a purifier of the national morality, — however it was meant or accepted at the time, howsoever definitely it was aimed at something near, or vaguely suggestive of something distantly hoped for, — was interpreted by the Jews themselves, after the voice of prophecy (that is, of exalted religious feeling) had ceased, as referring to an expected Messiah, and of course was played upon again and again by pretenders or enthusiasts who claimed to be this glorious personage. A superstitious veneration for the letter of their sacred writings — which the great prophets always discouraged — had grown in their degenerate days into a passion, and there were scribes and lawyers whose main occupation was to study the signs and enumerate the prophetic marks that would accompany the appearance of the Messiah when he came. Jesus — at least in my judgment — knew that no such expectation or hope as the Jewish people were cherishing in his day was either probable or possible. I do not suppose that he shared the superstitious feelings of his countrymen about the letter of their law, or adopted in any form their idea of the Messiah. I cannot say as much as this of his apostles; and it is very important to keep what *they* said about him, and what *he* said about himself, in different grades of authority. That they should sometimes interpret what he said in a Jewish way, seems to have been unavoidable, unless we are to suppose them to have shared his full elevation and enlightenment. When Jesus called himself the

Messiah, the Anointed, I have no doubt he meant to disclaim and set aside the Jewish hope, to deny its literal reality, and by the violent contrast of his poverty, his unacceptableness to the Jewish authorities, his powerlessness in any human weapons, his lack of all state and splendor and ability to enrich or protect his following, to declare the utterly *new* sense in which alone a Messiah was to be expected; as if he had said, "The only Messiah God will ever send the Jews or the world is a teacher and example of true righteousness, a radical reformer of Jewish superstitions, among which this is chief. You have been looking for princes of the old blood royal to come and sit on David's throne, and wield Solomon's wealth and splendor, and conquer your enemies, and drive Roman princes and armies and tax-gatherers out of the land. There is no such being to be looked for! It is an idle dream and a false rendering of the vague predictions of your old prophets. What they yearned for at heart was a renewer of a godly life, and a society built on the honor and service of the true God. That is the only Messiah you will ever see; and I am he!" Jesus felt himself to be anointed from God, able to teach and lead the people in this knowledge. In claiming the Messiahship, he claimed this place. It was the glorious simplicity, the holy boldness, the living faith in his heart, that enabled him to assert this claim. He was indeed the Anointed, the Messiah, for the whole world! That he felt this, constitutes his highest right to the name. Only the deepest knowledge

of the everlasting truth of God, the most unshadowed clearness of faith, the holiest sense of right to be the spiritual leader of his time and age and of all time, could have inspired or justified this claim. Others had made it in mean and low senses, and had perished for their presumption. Jesus made it in a sense of his own; in the only sense in which it had ever been true, or could be verified; a sense wholly different from that in which even the noblest prophets had ever made it. And if it had not been a true claim, and one which God honored and was satisfied with, the claim would have perished with its maker. Jesus himself died of this bold claim. He was thought to have made it in a Jewish sense; and had he done so, the claim would have been crucified with the claimant. But because he made it in a true sense, — in the honor of truth and holiness, in a universal and divine sense, — as a teacher of moral and spiritual things which had power to renew and bless countless ages and all humanity, the claim lived, though the claimant perished; and Jesus has indeed become the Messiah, not of the Jews, but of the whole world.

But there was another claim. Jesus' own common name for himself is, "the son of Man." The name sometimes given to him by his disciples is, "the son of God," and he accepted it. He must then be held responsible for this high title. The two phrases have been popularly supposed to refer to that inexplicable thing, the *double* nature of Christ. He was the son of man on his mother's

side; the son of God on God his father's side, having by hypothesis no human father. Now, thoroughly believing, as I do, that neither earthly mothers nor fathers are the sources or authors of their children's *souls*, but only God himself, who is the father of spirits, I fail to see what Jesus gains, by the hypothesis of his exceptional birth, that all children of God do not possess by their natural birth. We are all by our spiritual origin sons of God by spiritual generation, and also sons of men by natural generation. If Christ had a double nature in this sense, so have we. What escape Jesus made from the infirmities of our common fleshly nature by being born of a woman only, one does not see. He was of flesh and blood, and the same flesh and blood as his mother, and partook her human and fleshly frailty. He hungered and thirsted, and ate and drank, and wearied and slept, and bled and died. He grieved and wept, he was sad and glad; he loved his mother, and had his chosen friends, and haunts which he fled to in his fatigues and harassing cares. Whatever else he was, he was thoroughly human. The Catholic Church, pressed with his ordinary humanity, has been in this decade forced to shut off his mortal liabilities by declaring his mother sinless,—as if she had descended from her divine son, and not he from his mortal and, because human, not sinless mother. Such are the petty pretences into which superstition is forced when it leaves the plain ground of spiritual reason, and seeks nobility outside of moral and rational

grounds. Jesus *may* have had no human father; although it is strange that he makes no such claim, and that Paul never makes it, and certain that it does not enter into the woof and warp of the three first gospels, and depends upon the suspected chapters of the openings in Matthew and Luke. But whether he had or had not does not, on the face of it, change the fact that he had spiritually the same Father we all have, — God Almighty, — and from his mother the same fleshly nature. It is true that theologians in their creeds have attempted to show that Jesus was not *made*, but begotten. If this means anything, it means only what must be just as true of all other spirits. They are not *made* in the sense in which boxes and tools are made, but begotten; that is, they are effluents of the divine Spirit that breathes them into conscious existence. In fact, even human bodies, properly considered, are not made, but begotten; that is, they owe their life and being to a derived mysterious creative something that dates back to self-existent cause. It might be added that nothing that lives is made. It is only machines, furniture, lifeless objects, that can properly be said to be *made*. And there is a growing reluctance to the application of the word "maker," even to God, in any mechanical sense. He begets the universe, which partakes his nature and is a revelation of his mind, will, power, beauty, and might. But there is a difference, doubtless of great meaning, in the use of the definite article, — *the* son of man, *the* son of God. Jesus was *the* son

of man, *the* son of God, in some transcendent degree. Bible means book; *the* Bible, — *the* book; and it is a more expressive and distinguishing term than if the common word "book" had been abandoned and some exclusive name originated for its title. What the Bible is among books, Jesus is among the sons of men and the sons of God, — *the* son of man, *the* son of God. But surely he is none the less *a* son of man by being *the* son of man; none the less *a* son of God by being *the* son of God. Now we *know* what a son of man is, and a son of God; and we are all such. Are we, when we attempt to reach up to the true conception of Jesus' nature and dignity, to put him out of the class which alone tells us in what direction to look for his excellency?

The truth is, the very object for which Jesus calls himself both son of man and son of God is because they are really the same thing, and the very thing which, above all, it is to the purpose of a teacher come from God to tell us. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." The hidden glory and divinity of our origin and the heavenly capacity of our nature, is the ground of all Jesus' and all Paul's appeals to the human soul. What is there lacking in the human soul when fully lived out and completely ordered, when full of the Spirit of its Author as it was in our Saviour, to constitute all that Jesus was? Is it not created in the divine image? a partaker of the divine nature? Can archangels have a nobler

lineage? can they depart from the image in which *we* are made, and not descend in the dignity of their origin? There can be nothing in spiritual nature between the human and divine, except degrees. The human is assumed to be finite. It would be if it were not from God, and in God, and by God. But the human is not *finite* in its nature. It is infinite and divine; and the divine is not unlike the human, but only the human seen in its source and perfectness. Some think it profane to claim Christ as our brother; why not, then, to claim God as our Father? If to claim to have the same nature as Christ is presumption, why not more so to claim to have the nature of God, which is expressly conceded to us, who are said to be made in his likeness and to partake the divine nature?

The whole effort to separate God and man, and Christ and man, — as if contact, resemblance, and unity of nature and mutual intelligence and common grounds of being, were not the very crown and aim and glory of Christianity, — is due to a childish weakness which clamors about the divine and the human, the finite and the infinite, as if they were opposites and antagonists, and not the same thing, considered now in part and now in whole, now in its source and now in its stream. Time and eternity are not opposites, but the same thing considered in sample and in bulk. The fruits of the spirit of love and holiness are of the same nature in God and in holy men, in Christ and his saints.

Jesus is a great teacher and messenger "come from God." But let us not isolate God in time and place, and conclude that if Jesus comes from God he must needs have come from afar off, come from some remote sphere of being, come from a previous existence! To come from God, is to come from divine wisdom, love, and truth. We ourselves come from God. Anything *comes* from God that expresses God's will, love, and mercy. God is here. God is in the souls of his children. The bosom of God is still open, and is sending forth new births and nourishing new children all the time. He who lives in God and from God, knowing his will and doing it as Jesus knew and did it, is older than Abraham, inasmuch as what he knows and tells of God is more central and from a deeper source. This is the pre-existence of Christ, — that he expressed truths and fulfilled purposes older than Abraham, because as old as God's love and holiness. This is Christ's oneness with God,— his complete identification of will and heart with his Father. This is the reason why those who see him, see the Father; those who love him, love God; those who trust him, trust God. This makes him Emmanuel, or God with us!

"Whom do men say that I am?" We might answer this question with many replies which would contradict the simple truth as the Gospels teach it. "Men say you are the second person in the Trinity; they say you are your own father; they say you are a being of a different nature from your

mother and your brethren; they say you are a visitant from another world, concerning which, if you were so, you refrained from telling us anything not known before by faith and spiritual insight." But although the Church says these vain and incredible things, it doubtless says them only as an extravagant way of confessing a faith which we who refuse these fables share with them. "Whom do men say that I am?" We reply, the Church Universal, all Christendom, unite in saying that you are the all-sufficient Saviour; the light of the moral world; the pattern of all graces and perfections; the only perfect humanity the race has seen. They say truly that about you have crystallized the affections of all the purest saints and the reverence of all the devoutest hearts. They say that you are nearest to God, and that you stand, and will stand, the blessed mediator between your brethren and your Father and theirs. They say that your words remain true in all ages, and that your example never grows antiquated or needless. They say that in your life and character and spirit God has revealed all that can be considered necessary or useful for men to know concerning his moral purposes and spiritual affections. They say that your insight into your Father's will verifies itself by all who trust it; that your guidance never misleads a faithful follower; and that ages on ages only add to its significance and value. They say that every superstition and old theory which sought to make you great according to mere human standards, when it

falls away, only discloses higher claims, until your authority is independent of doubtful testimony and of supports that are adventitious or questionable, and stands, in its own self-evident weight and worth, more immovable than the mountains.

And *we* say that, doubting and denying the titles and deific ascriptions that the Church still offers you, *we* say that you are to us inexpressibly dear and venerable; that we will yield to none in the affectionate homage we pay you in our hearts and homes and churches; that the songs of angels did not and could not exaggerate the importance and blessedness of your advent, or overstate the claim you have established in nearly nineteen centuries, during which your religion has been the chief light and consolation and guidance of humanity. You have taught us two inexpressibly glorious things, and taught them by illustrating them in your life, — the *humanity* of God, the *divinity* of man. You have authorized us to see in what was a dim, distant, dreadful, unapproachable Being, called God, a Father whose greatness and power do not render him inhuman, do not make him incapable of caring for and listening to, of pitying, pardoning, loving, and saving, his children on the earth. You have proclaimed the humanity of God and banished the dreadful feeling that God was too great, too distant, too mysterious to be known, approached, loved, and trusted. This alone made a religion of love and mercy possible among men; this alone has made God intelligible as the loving Friend and

Father of his lowly but his veritable human offspring. And you have made man conscious of his divinity by revealing in your spirit and human life, and on the earth and among its temptations and sufferings, a faith, capacity, and holiness, a sinlessness and a superiority to all evil and all trials, that has not only glorified you, but us. In calling us to follow and resemble you, you have owned our divine capacity, you have brought God down to man, you have lifted man up to God. You are thus the Mediator indeed, — the true Messiah, the son of man and son of God! And we hail your name and influence with inexpressible joy, and with songs of triumph and gratitude, throughout the Church and the Christian world!

XX.

PERSONAL IMMORTALITY.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

ROMANS vi. 5.

DEATH and resurrection are usually spoken of as directly antagonistic ideas when applied to humanity. If they are such in man's case, he is certainly a great exception to the rule which prevails in Nature. So far as we know, Nature lives on only by dying and rising again. She has no capacity or possibility of continuance except by passing through a continued series of deaths and resurrections. Her life is a perpetual revival from constantly recurring deaths. And nothing is clearer than this, — that death in nature is *not* destruction, is not the extinction and end of things, but only change and continuance under new conditions. Annihilation is something that physical or natural science does not recognize. It does not enter into the conception of learned and competent philosophers that anything in nature is ever absolutely subject to extinction. The systems of worlds are in constant process of change. The heavens have changed, and are changing. The sun himself must

burn out, the planets fade into ashen cinders, the world dissolve in dust. But the chemical and material forces of which these systems are composed, must find somewhere else, and in new forms, new combinations, and continue indestructible in their essence. The deepest law is persistency, continuance, resurrection, immortality; not death and annihilation. Death is an incident, not an essential final event, so far as nature and the material universe is concerned.

You know very well what the death of the year is, — the preparation for a resurrection of the vegetable kingdom in more vigorous strength and beauty; each death giving only that rest by which the tree or plant is enabled to put forth some fresh power and clothe itself in larger and more glorious habiliments, until that more decisive death comes, when its career as a special kind of plant is run, and it dies, to take on some wholly new form or forms in other plants, or perhaps in animal creations. But this change, if it be the extinction of its *specific* type of life, is not the annihilation of its essential forces. They live on by resurrection in new forms of being.

The animals die; and though philosophers have not been wanting who believe that their spirits, or life-principle, is continued in some individual form which makes their survival something more than the preservation of their indestructible forces or material atoms, yet I think we could not draw much hope of our personal immortality from their fate.

We do not call even the noblest of them *persons*, but only things. There is an approach to personality in some exceptionally intelligent beasts. They are sometimes marked with such individuality and characteristic traits, half moral in their aspect, that they may be felt almost to possess *character;* and it is no wonder that the American savage sometimes has buried with him his intelligent, faithful dog, who has borne his hunger and thirst, watched him sleeping, guarded and defended him in danger, accompanied him on a hundred searches for game, and helped him to secure his prey with instincts keener than his own, — buried with him, in expectation of his joining him in his new career in the hunting-fields of a fairer world. But clearly what we perceive in the vegetable, the insect, and the animal world is probable and final dispersion and extinction of all that constitutes individual and specific existence. What troubles and dismays instructed man is the fear that although his material and spiritual essence may, according to the analogies of outward nature, both survive, they may not survive in an individual or personal form; that as his dust will return to the dust from which it sprang, to reappear perhaps as a part of some other human form, or tree, or plant, or insect, so his spirit may return to the God who gave it, only as a drop of the spiritual ocean, to reappear in other spirits, without any knowledge or memory of himself, and however much it may be the same, and indestructible in its uses, yet in no sense identical with that

only thing that concerns him, — self-consciousness, memory, will; in short, personal immortality.

There have been nations and races in whom the hope of personal immortality was superseded or lost in the hope of continued existence only in a common national destiny and immortality. There is doubtless something heroic and sublime in this surrender of personal longings and expectations, — in being able to entertain the choice of a people's or a nation's life as preferable to one's own. It is akin to the warrior's joy and pride in giving his life for freedom, nationality, race, country. The Jews had this capacity and feeling to a surprising degree. They lived in their children and descendants, and also in their ancestors, in their nationality, and on their Messianic hope. They lived too, still more, in their God. His victories, his immortality, his moral and spiritual triumphs over death, and decay, and the divinities of heathen nations were *their* triumphs, and they exulted in them with a noble surrender of all private and personal expectations. So other peoples of the Oriental world, with a still more wonderful triumph of soul over all hopes or longings for personal perpetuation, have been able to place their joy and hope in the expectation of being lost to all consciousness in the sea of the eternal principle of Being. To them God alone really lived; and they wanted to live only as parts of God, — lost as the brook is lost in the ocean, — without consciousness, or memory, or hope, or distinctive being, but glorified in partaking the peace, calmness,

eternity of the source and centre of all being, — the *nirvana* of the Hindoo, a blessed state of absolute forgetfulness, of complete unconsciousness, in which the individual soul was placed beyond the power of suffering, no longer knew any limitations, no longer knew *itself*, but became, by ages of effort to suppress all personal desires, longings, or wishes, a part of the Supreme Spirit. This was their wonderful substitute for our modern and Christian hopes of a personal, conscious, a private immortality, — a perpetuation of our individual spirits, preserving the memory of life, the accumulations of experience, the discipline of earthly existence in a higher state of being and of happiness and under a spiritual sky, in more direct and open vision of God, and with departed friends and the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven.

It is certainly something encouraging to our faith in immortality to learn from the testimony of nature or the analogies of the physical world that *nothing* is ever destroyed in the sense of being annihilated. For if matter is not, and seemingly cannot be, destroyed, however dispersed, how much less can spirit? Our spirits, we may safely say by the light of nature, are not extinguishable in their elements and essence. But I cannot think this would offer much comfort or hope to those of us who have become profoundly attached to our personality, and who want evidence or rational prospect of continuing beyond the certain decay and death of our bodies in a conscious state of spiritual

existence. The grand question of our time, despite the confidence placed in the authority of revealed religion, is therefore this, — What evidence do nature, reason, candid philosophy, sober thought, experience, the testimony of our own and other souls give us that *personality* is a sacred and precious and mastering principle in the spiritual world; that self-consciousness, the knowledge of our identity, the thought and the significance of the *I*, which is the one distinctive spiritual thing separating man from the more intelligent brutes, the source of society, the basis of personal dignity, the ground of law, the primary spring of religion, the "be all and end all" of man's present worth and glory, as it is the anchor holding him to Christ and to God, — what, I say, is the ground, independent of revelation, on which we rest our hope that this personality will survive the change called death? If everything is against it *except* the resurrection of Christ, if we have no hope except in the revelation of Jesus, clearly we put an awful strain on that single strand, and one which, if speculation and question go on in the direction and at the pace at which they have proceeded during the last generation, may in another leave us in painful doubt or dull despair.

In reply, I can name only a few of the grounds of confidence and promise which most affect my own mind, and give me most hope and comfort from a purely natural point of view. The meaning, significance, promise, or prophecy of human *personality* is the centre and essence of the

conflict between believers and doubters of man's immortality.

Now I begin with saying that if man is the confessed summit of the visible creation, the noblest of creatures, it is equally true that his *personality* is the noblest and most dignified characteristic, nay, cause, of this superior nature. He is a thinking, reflecting, self-knowing, moral, and intellectual being only by force of this *personality*. The law does not call children under a certain age *persons*, because they are not responsible until self-consciousness, reflection, comparison, a distinction between themselves and their impulses, or forces operating upon them, is felt and recognized. To this sense of personality belong all moral life, all capacity of progress and improvement, all dignity and worth of character. Men are properly distinguished and graded by the degree in which personality, or the sense of it, is developed in them. What marks a man out as not one of the common herd only, is the special force in and with which his *personality* exists and acts. You cannot lump him with his race. He is a *person* by eminence and genius, talents, achievements, and in the emphasis they give to this personality. It is the jewelled *hilt* of that sword whose shining blade, however keen and lustrous, weighty and fearful, falls useless and aimless when its handle is gone. Nay, it is the hand that grasps that hilt. It is the central principle of the man himself; the soul of his soul, the innermost and last recess and home of his being. Humanity,

if it exists at all in any abstract essence, really exists, not in a race, but in individual men and women. There *is* properly no human race, except a name or generality which comprehends all the persons of that race, as there is no dodo or megasaurian after the last dodo has died. Nature is barren, unmoral, loveless, uninteresting in her mere forces; and only living, attractive, knowable, consummate in the things, species, individual plants, animals, insects, flowers — above all, the *persons* — she produces or attests. Now, then, is it possible or probable that the most sacred, venerable, awful, tender, central experience or manifestation she makes, the noblest characteristic of her noblest offspring, the principle or fact of *personality* in man, has no permanency, contains no prophecy, has no future? If *that* lasts *not*, no matter what else endures, man is not immortal in the only sense in which it is of any interest to him to be immortal.

But why should we question the significance and prophecy of man's personalty? In all the noblest specimens of man his *personality* grows sacred and precious. It is his highest hint of the being and life of God. He cannot conceive of the divine intelligence as moral and intellectual except by ascribing personality to God. If God be a mere unconscious force, or collection or dispersion of forces, without central being, self-consciousness, or capacity of love or will, then he is surely not a person capable of being loved or of loving, of being worshipped or of receiving worship. The truth is,

the personality of God and the immortality of man are thoughts and faiths most intimately dependent on each other. I do not wonder that men who doubt or deny the personality of God, doubt or deny that we possess evidence or grounds of hope of our immortality. But if we find any evidence that personality is the proper name and the proper essence of the divine life and character, we shall perceive that it is not without reason that we are said to be made in his image, seeing that our personality, which we derive from him, is all that raises us above the brutes and their probable fate. You will of course notice that it is this sacred principle of *personality* which makes us moral, responsible beings.

Now I beg to ask if the moral sentiment in man, the sense of right, duty, obligation, is not the most dignified, glorious, exalting of all his faculties or capacities? But it is only as a *person* that he can have this. Is that, then, on which all that gives order, dignity, beauty, aspiration, conception of God's holiness; all that makes character, worth, self-sacrifice, communion possible, — to be regarded as less permanent, less significant, less precious in the divine eyes than the dust that he never annihilates, the spirit that in all probability never can perish? If there be any force or principle in God's universe that he must hold more sacred than any other, or which nature must respect, anything in itself more essentially indestructible, more worthy of persistency, more lamentable to regard as among accidents, it must be the *personality* of souls. It is the

last and highest outcome of nature; it is the crown of being; it is the centre and key of morality and religion. If it is to perish, we may well believe that there is no personal God; and if no personal God, no God at all that it concerns us to know, or worship, or trust.

Consider, next, that the whole growth and progress of society, civilization, freedom, law, religion, is the history of the development of the sacredness of person; that to discriminate and separate responsibility, secure personal rights, acknowledge personal duties, live a personal life, destroy the slavery of numbers, the tyranny of wealth, the massing and confounding of humanity in castes, in serfdom, in aggregated undistinguishable collections, has been alike the method of civilization and Christianity, and the source of its triumphs. I am not you, you are not I. I cannot merge my rights, privileges, duties in any general reservoir of humanity. I cannot be responsible for others' sins, or they for mine. The neglect, the abuse of persons in general in favor of classes or of exceptional persons, — this is the principle of all wrong, all debasement, and the source of ruin to states. To respect the person of woman in her weakness, of the citizen in his poverty, of the humblest man in his own inability to protect his rights, — this is the triumph of public morality, of law and social freedom. Is this blessed, elevating, ennobling principle, which really makes the *person* of man sacred, not an irresistible voice in defence of the precious significance and prophecy

of personality? Will God, who planted this principle, allow the mere death of the body to loosen the very centralizing principle of man's soul? Will his moral and intellectual faculties disperse into thin air, as the gases fly when the bubble bursts? Or will that sacred polarity of his being hold them to his central, self-conscious essence, and continue to clothe his ego, himself, in their beautiful spiritual folds? I cannot doubt what the answer of a true philosophy must be.

But again, the sense of *personality* and faith in *immortality* have been inseparably connected and proportioned to each other. A weak sense of personality, a weak feeling of right and duty, leaves a weak hold upon, a feeble longing for, a doubtful or apathetic state of mind in regard to, immortality. A powerful sense of personal rights and duties is equivalent to a strong sense of personality; and this sense has always gone with the thirst, expectation, and prophecy of immortality. It is the strongest, noblest, purest minds that most covet, most aspire to, most love immortality. Brutes, indeed, cling to life, but not from any instinct of immortality. Man, on the other hand, is often eager, in his weakness of the body and his weariness of the world, to die; but if he is noble and spiritual, it is because he longs to begin a purer and more emancipated life in futurity. The sensual and devilish fear death; but it is not because they shudder at nothingness, but only because they tremble with a physical instinct before the mere physical event.

But the wise, the good, the aspiring, want to live after the body dies, to know more of God, to look deeper into the universe, to complete their knowledge, to unfold their faculties, to drink more fully of the divine pleasures which their souls foretell.

Shall a faith in personal immortality, which has dignified, ennobled, and blessed all who have spiritually received it, which has elevated the nations that have laid hold upon it, turn out to be a falsehood and a mistake? Do lies and false hopes usually do the work of uplifting the soul and human society? Can we believe morality to be a trick of mere convenience, religion a fabrication of cunning priests, maintained now only from weak custom and for its worldly advantages? Can the idea of a living God, a holy, gracious, loving father of his human offspring, a conception so lofty, so exalting, restraining, and beautifying, be only a fond fancy of ideal imaginations, a lie, a dream, a delusion? Why, this is making reason, affection, thought, feeling, mere mockeries, and life a tale told by an idiot. It involves a scepticism deep as hell itself thus to make light of the ever-advancing tendencies and testimonies of human experience! And if we cannot reasonably doubt the reality of a moral sense or of a holy will and a sacred central Being, called God, we need not question any more than these, the promise and prospect of personal immortality, for they all stand and fall together.

But to all this natural or interior spiritual testimony is to be added the testimony of Jesus Christ,

who affirmed the personal immortality of the soul and based all his teaching upon it. He affirmed it, not as a fact that began with himself, or depended on himself, but one that had always been true. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not dead, but alive and in heaven. He affirmed it, too, as not needing any external testimony. It was not, "I will by my death and resurrection prove it," but, "I *am* the resurrection and the life." He appealed for his evidence to the depths of human consciousness. He spoke from an absolute interior conviction so complete as not to need proof. He already *had* eternal life in himself, and he strove to awaken it in others. The apostles, not partaking all his confidence, afterwards rested the hope not a little, and perhaps somewhat unwisely, at any rate far more than he himself did, upon his resurrection in a bodily shape. Jesus perhaps, although in the uncertainty of the text and the doubtful history of the record it is dangerous to be too confident on that point, foresaw and predicted his own bodily resurrection. For one, I could almost wish he had not done so; for it would have left him entirely free from any complication with the always suspected incidents of that miraculous event. Far be it from me to originate misgivings on that point; but no thoughtful man would be willing to have the inner witness for this truth, so solemn and so exalting, so free from doubtful physical problems, subordinated to the uncertainties of all very ancient records and made wholly dependent upon the sacred tradition of the physical resurrection of

Jesus' body. That event occurred, if the gospels are absolutely authentic, and it is to be accepted on their authority. But it is not so much the literal truth of the fact, important and interesting as that is, which makes the New Testament statement so precious, as it is the instinct which seized upon the outer fact as the expression of an inner truth, a forefeeling true to human wants and capacities, and built up the religion of Christ as a religion of resurrection and of immortality. It is the *history* of this doctrine; the instant hold it took upon the Church; the eager faith with which Paul welcomed it; the vast place it has occupied in religion since; the glorious inspiration it supplied, the incalculable hope, comfort, and joy it has furnished, — which speak so powerfully for its truth in the highest sense, whatever may be the value of the husk of fact in which it is enclosed. If I believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, it is because I more fully believe in the resurrection which his life in this world attested, — the resurrection of a soul that did not recognize *death* as a *finality*, or as in the least threatening eternal life. Jesus *was* the resurrection and the life, and they were one. It degrades his words to think he referred merely to his coming *bodily* resurrection. (That fact, established, proves what? That a dead body may come to life. But why may it not die again? and if Jesus' body rose, does it follow that all men's bodies will rise?) The immortality of the soul must rest upon something as universal, as spiritual, as eternal as the soul itself. It cannot be

trusted to the testimony of external history, or literary records, or bodily appearances; it must be founded in the spiritual consciousness, in the laws of the soul, in the essential merits of the hope in its inextinguishable charm for humanity, and in the testimony which its fruits produce on those who live by its light.

It is not in accordance with God's providence to make spiritual hopes dependent on bodily experiences, or to *subordinate* the soul to the body; to make the *natural* cheap by leaning man's highest hopes on the miraculous; to pick out special times and peoples for illuminations that are not open to all who possess a soul if they obey its inward light. We must rest our hopes on what is deepest, holiest, most divine within us, and on the life and character and affirmations of those most exalted specimens of our race who have had the most unquestioning faith, connected with the least disturbed, the least fanciful, and the least irrational dispositions and qualities. Jesus, the calmest, sanest, purest, best of souls, the consummate flower of humanity, affirmed our personal immortality with undoubting, unqualified certainty. I believe him, not chiefly because he rose from the dead, but because he was all alive, immortal, living on principle and for ends that were eternal, from the Sermon on the Mount to the words from the cross. I have the witness in myself that he was the Son of God; his words find my inmost heart, his affirmations evoke and clarify my own. "I know that my Redeemer" — namely God, for these

words were written ages before Christ appeared — "liveth, and in the latter day shall raise me from the dead." Blessed festival, that celebrates a risen Saviour! Though the tomb *had* kept thy ashes, thy spirit could never have been holden of death! If thou wert so pure and instinct with immortality that thy very dust was made heavenly and flew to heaven with thy spirit, it shall not be wholly incredible! But we expect no such resurrection for *our* dust, and shall be only too glad to give its worn and devitalized particles up to the earth. But thy resurrection, thy spiritual triumph over death, thy spiritual trust in the soul's superiority to the mere material clothing it here wears, thy abounding confidence in the eternal destiny of our moral and rational nature, the sacred prophecy of our personality, the eternal unfolding of that bud which can put on its higher beauties only under the deathly frost that stains its leaves to heavenly gold,—this we welcome, this we lean on with our whole spiritual weight, assured it cannot fail while virtue, truth, the moral nature remain, and the true and holy God lives in the eternal now and the eternal forever!

XXI.

THE RESURRECTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

1 CORINTHIANS xv. 46.

A GREAT religious revolution is going on in the world, promoted more effectively perhaps by those who do not know it than by those who do. It is nothing less than a complete reversal of a method of thought and feeling about divine things which had, with here and there a quiet protest from genius and gifted religious experience, prevailed from soon after Christ's appearance until within the last half century. The greatest miracle since Christ's resurrection is that insurrection against the Church's time-hardened parody of his simplicity which for eighteen centuries made his religion, at the best, only a relief from a curse,— not the continuation and enlargement of God's word written in the very nature of man. It is less than a half century ago that within the Church we have begun to see any due recognition of the rights of our human nature. I call it the resurrection of human nature, buried for ages in distrust, contempt, and derision. It is on

this topic that I propose to fasten your Easter thoughts, and by it to rouse your gratitude and joy in the risen Christ, who at length sees the nature he shared rising with him.

That method — a false one, or at best provisional — was the putting the spiritual before the natural, and interpreting the natural by the spiritual, and not the spiritual by the natural, making man's nature not a self-interpreting thing, growing into light without deserting or abusing its root, but something wrong, dark, bound up in its own limitations, and only capable of being understood when pronounced a ruin, and then by starting anew, not from itself, but as a hanging parasite of revelation from the skies. God, not having sent it when we came, must send us word from heaven before we could know right from wrong. We were no judge of it through our very nature. The natural was not merely lower in order of time, but it was foreign to, and no proper support for, the spiritual. We must begin with the spiritual and learn from it to despise the natural. But for revelation we should have known nothing true about ourselves or about God. Natural veracity, natural honor, natural sense, were all counterfeits and deceivers. Revelation first showed man his true natural self. In its eyes he was a weakling, a depraved and lost creature; his pursuits and present interests were all trifling and foolish; his life an idle dream or a noisy revel. His natural reason was not to be relied on; his conscience was seared as with a hot iron, and its voice

discordant and false. The world was a scene only of warfare, rapine, fraud, and injustice; a valley of tears; a place that had no hope from anything its inhabitants could or would do for it. Nothing could account for the disordered state of external nature but the hypothesis that it was the wreck of an original order in which earthquake, volcano, torrid heat, polar cold, pestilence, and famine were unknown; and nothing could explain man's dangerous appetites and passions, his selfishness, envy, malice, lust, with all the emulations, strifes, and wars that grew out of them, except the notion of a tremendous fall from its original estate, by which the very nature of the race had been corrupted, perverted, dislocated; until its whole head was sick, and its whole heart faint. How was this accursed state of things brought about in nature and humanity? Nature had no answer, man no reply.

But God knew, and might tell; though not in any way that man could understand by his ordinary rational intelligence. He could tell, but only if men would believe what he told them implicitly; that is, by an act of faith which was something opposed by and to reason. He could tell, but it must be exclusively by revelation: and the very idea of revelation was of something that, originating in absolute wisdom, could not be apprehensible by human reason; was likely to seem opposed to reason; was likely to contradict the blind conscience of man; something that would be incredible in itself, unless supported by an evidence that superseded

reason, — by authority, in short, resting on miracles, miracles having it for their very essence to set aside and nullify the laws of nature and show a power above and greater than nature, and of course, as a corollary, a right and a power to set human reason and human conscience aside, to nullify and supersede them, and make all their protests blasphemies and all their doubts sinful. Thus faith meant believing against evidence of any natural kind. "I believe it because it is impossible," said the devout zealot of the Catholic Church. The great test of piety was self-distrust and distrust of all natural feelings and all guidance from reason and conscience, with implicit trust in revelation, interpreted by an Infallible Church, which was its official trustee and administrator. Under this system and method the very difficulties of revelation, whether as to its accompanying statements of a mysterious kind, or its gnarled and dreadful doctrines as the Church interpreted them, became only new arguments for its truth. Could it be expected that God's ways or ideas should be what we poor, fallen, finite, limited creatures could see to be just and right according to any rational or natural standards?

Reason and conscience, humanly speaking, would of course think that a divine creator — all perfection, infinite in power, wisdom, goodness — would not create a race which was allowed to fall in its first representative into hopeless sin and involve all his successors in eternal ruin, place them from

the beginning beneath the curse of God; in token of it convert animals originally tame into wild beasts, change a creature, originally set in absolute idleness and perfect ease, living in innocency in a garden, into a being who must henceforth wring his food from a reluctant and blasted soil, in the sweat of his brow, and his children, who were designed to come into the world as easily as the nests are filled with birds, henceforth to come only at the peril of their mothers' lives, and with unutterable sorrow and labor. But this horrible change in the original benignity of nature which was now reversed — in the fortunes of humanity now made terrible, hateful to contemplate — is easily explained, taught the theologians, if we remember that the Being who does it is responsible to no one, and scorns our petty rules of justice and mercy. He is an absolute sovereign, and can do just what he wills, and he makes things right simply by calling them so. If he chooses — and he has chosen — to curse the earth and all its inhabitants for Adam's disobedience, who can say him nay? Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus? Who is man, to question God, or to call things incredible, or unjust, or impossible, only because they do not agree with his rational and moral judgments? This is the way in which the spiritual was set over and made first, as the supersessor, critic, and condemner of the natural.

It seems almost like a caricature thus to describe truly the sort of notions of God and of

religion which prevailed almost unquestioned for seventeen centuries after Jesus rose from the dead! Indeed it is accounted almost a libel on our orthodox predecessors to quote their creeds as if they meant just what they said; and nothing can exhibit the wonderful change which I began with saying had come over the Church and the world more than this very fact.

But what is the change? It is the re-assertion of the natural as divine also, and the proper precursor and essential foundation of the spiritual. It is simply the result of a rising rebellion of human nature against the tyranny of professional priests and authoritative creeds, against a conspiracy to quench the light and the value of the light of its own native powers and rational and moral testimonies. Humanity meekly and servilely submitted to the Church for long ages when it ceased to ask any consent or any approval of its teachings from human reason or conscience. It modestly supposed the Church must have some tremendous right to take this monstrous position of absolute authority; that it would not dare to do it without due warrant; that it was a most dangerous thing to risk excommunication from God's official delegate to mankind, and that it had better submit. Oh! when one recalls the ages when poor blinded and handcuffed humanity, betrayed by its own reverence and sense of weakness and need, was compelled, under dread of endless misery, to swallow its native doubts, to quench the light that lighteth every man that cometh

into the world, and — worst outrage of all — to say that it loved supremely a Being who, if truly described, reeked with all the cruelty and savage hatred of his children that would become only a fiend, what heart not sunk in a religious cowardice that is base and grovelling but must hate the terrible tyrant called "ecclesiastical authority," that has thus for centuries humiliated our humanity in the dust! Alas! it will take ages to recover fully from the shock to reason and conscience which the race received in this coarse but sanctified bullying from the outward Church. Even now, Reason has not half recovered her native confidence, Conscience her bright original charter. There is a fearful confusion among men in the whole region of morals and piety, due to the blasphemous and long-successful attempt to make man surrender the courage of his opinions, suspect the light of reason and conscience, defame the voice of nature, and lie prone and abject before priest-made altars, when he should have stood erect, looking around and judging for himself. My blood boils when I think of the irremediable wrongs of my race, — their manhood crushed, their reason insulted and denied, their consciences outraged, and their worship, under threats and penalties, extorted for the almighty irresponsible tyrant who had cursed the ground and the race in its very cradle, and would grant it absolution and restoration only on the base surrender of its real faith and its honest opinions before an incredible declaration of what must be called holy lies!

But how have we escaped, and with us the largest part of all Protestantism, from this depraving system of false religion? First, the scientific instincts of humanity protested and said, The Church, which calls itself divine and all-wise, may have our blind faith in its dogmas about unknown matters, but shall not force its false science upon us. We know that the sun does not go round the earth; we know that the earth does not stand still; we know that the world is round, and not flat; and we will not, for we cannot, pursue science on Church principles. We must trust our senses and our observation, and not her authority. Then political instincts protested. The Church may have what theological opinions she pleases, said the citizen, and we will honor them. It is her business to declare the faith; but she is evidently no judge of how to govern cities and nations in their civil affairs. We protest against her setting our kings up and down, embezzling our taxes, and circumscribing our political liberties. So another strand of wire in the iron rope of Church tyranny over the human will and reason was broken when political rights began to prevail. Next, social and domestic instincts took alarm, and said, The Church may keep her right to govern our faith; but she plainly has no right to rule our homes, to control our wives, and steal our daughters' hearts, before they know what they are about, for her nunneries. She has no right to shut up our shops and remit the labors of our apprentices, to multiply holidays without number, and take

away our daily bread to feed her gorgeous altars. Finally, Reason rose and said, The Church doubtless is the rightful interpreter of Scripture, and she has a right to take her time and use her divine economy in being silent, or non-committal, or in telling what she knows; but although she may be believed to know more than we know, she can't make that to be true which reason declares plainly to be untrue. And then Conscience applauded, and cried, Nor make that right which Conscience declares to be wrong, nor that wrong which she declares plainly to be right. And then, when all these several protests were united, and science, and politics, and trade, and domestic rights, and experience all combined with the rise of the modern spirit, the revival of literature, the growth of the public press, the sway of public opinion, as against Church authority and ecclesiastical prescription, Humanity proceeded to reinstate reason, conscience, natural feelings in their place, and to say more or less boldly, Here in the human soul is the starting-place, here is the place to begin with. We must ground ourselves on our own nature, and build up our pyramid from the bottom towards God above the sky, and not hang it upside down in the air, or let it down like a waterspout emptying from the clouds. The only thing we can be sure of is our own faculties; the only way we can judge our Creator is to examine his workmanship in his chief work, Man, and see what he values and what he thinks and feels, by noticing what he has made his creature at

his best, when he is most himself, and in the best specimen of his kind, think and feel. As observation and induction have changed science from the wild and airy guesses of alchemy, astrology, and cabalistics into the reasonable, inductive forms of pure mathematics, geometry, astronomy, chemistry, physiology, so the new reverence and respect for facts measurable and observable have changed, first philosophy, and then theology, and last of all religion, into forms of knowledge resting on what is known, and not on what is assumed, guessed, or taken on external authority. It used to be thought honorable to God to dishonor his creation, and specially his crowning creature, man. What folly! What would be thought nowadays of beginning an investigation in court before a judge, or a bench of judges, who were pronounced incompetent to try the case, or before a jury called stupid and incapable of estimating evidence, or with witnesses in whom under oath no confidence was to be put, and who were told that they could not be believed, say what they might. Yet this was the old attitude of religion in the hands of its priests: "We want you to believe in God and his justice and holiness, in heaven and hell, in the Church, and in us," they said. "And we begin with telling you that you are an accursed and lost race, a fallen crew; that your reason is depraved, your conscience darkened, your affections perverted, your judgment worthless; that you know nothing as you ought to know it, think nothing as you ought, feel nothing as you should. And to this we add,

that unless you believe and do just what we tell you, whether it seems just or not, to hell you will go, and it will be everlasting! And you must honor and worship and love supremely the Being who made your sinful ancestor, and has entailed this dreadful fate of a perverted judgment, a depraved heart, and an untrustworthy head upon you." Can anything more exasperating be conceived of? anything more requiring or justifying a great revolt against Church and State leagued in this conspiracy to crush nature and truth and holy instinct out of man?

But the tide has fully turned. It was ebbing away for seventeen centuries from any true respect for human nature, and man was left stranded, without any open or free navigation between himself and his Maker. There was a strict Church embargo on all natural intercourse with the spiritual world. Man was in rebellion, his nature was alien. God would not and could not have any intercourse with him except through war ambassadors. Under flag of truce he might send them, and after peace on certain terms of submission, and return to absolute obedience to what was prescribed. The blockade might be passed only with the Church flag at the fore. The priesthood were privileged. They came as to an enemy — in rebellion, but stricken with pestilence and weakened by camp-diseases — to bring the proposals of a peace which could be purchased only by a complete prostration of natural justice and common sense. They said, You are lost, and do not know it; you are lost, and were lost

before you were born. You are worse than sinners; you cannot help sinning; your very natures are sinful; you are really moral and spiritual monsters. But God has compassion on you, and a plan has been invented in the Council of Eternity for saving such of you as will denounce yourselves as deserving eternal ruin, will abdicate all hope and all reliance upon morality and good works, and will just accept instead a ticket of admission into the Church, which is the gate of heaven, purchasable by faith in it and signed in Christ's blood. Ah, what a bribe to poor, trembling humanity was this! Hell flaming for it on one hand, heaven and its golden streets smiling welcome on the other, and the Church, tickets in hand, offering these entrances to all who would prostrate their reason and conscience before her altars and blindly trust her authority. Eat this wafer, it is Christ's real flesh! Do you believe it? Of course you cannot in any honest, natural sense; but we want no honest, natural sense. We want not belief — we want faith, something that does not rest on any evidence, which owes its preciousness to its being against evidence! Do you believe it now? You can at least say so, and act as if you did. Nay, you can hope you believe it, and you can agree to call it blasphemy not to believe it; and this will help you, at least, to know how depraved and dangerous human reason is, that makes it so difficult to credit the truths of revelation.

Do you begin to see out of what a darkened forest of priest-grown superstitions religious faith has been

hewing its way these last generations? And now we are almost in the open and under a sky that does not reflect in every cloud the fears and threats the Church has been sending up from her sepulchral crypts and darkened altars, where artificial odors, and unknown tongues, and stained glass, and mysterious vestments, and an unsexed clergy, and an unnatural instead of a supernatural faith made a theology and a religion which was as true to man's weaker passions and longings as it was false and fatal to his truly human faculties, his reason and conscience. See how this new base of reverence and respect for man's nature, instead of distrust and contempt for it, has changed the whole course and tendencies of theology, not only among us, but everywhere. We were for ages called to see the human only in contrast with the divine. To name God was to shame man. To have his approval, it was necessary to do without our own. He was just what we were not. We were all he hated and despised. He was all our nature most resisted, most feared, and least had. His glory was to curse our intellects and our natural sense of right. Nothing so dangerous as any pride in our intelligence, any reliance on our virtue. We must call ourselves liars all, haters of all that is good, utterly worthless; and then he would pick us up, as Oriental monarchs pardoned the slaves that grovelled at their feet. The great humiliation of Christ was that he took our nature upon himself. What condescension! As if God had not always done more than that, — put his own divine nature into every human

soul and called us his temples. But think of the absurd notion still prevailing about Christ's *double* nature, — divine and human! As if a king had changed places with his groom, and hid his crown under the filthy cap of his meanest hostler! And this mistaken notion of Christ's humiliation has filled the Church and the world with the most fulsome flatteries of Jesus and with effeminate recantation of man's honest and wholesome self-respect. What was the effect? For ages Christ's humanity — his glory, and not his shame — was utterly buried out of sight in a New Testament read with spectacles colored to hide it, or not read at all because dangerous to Church creeds. It was blasphemy to think of Christ's humanity as anything but an appearance, an illusion, a dress put on to hide the Prince and parade his humility. To think he really had a human nature and was a human being, instead of merely keeping a human nature, as a man keeps a horse, was the height of profanity! To prove this, you have only to note that not a biography of Jesus' earthly life (the only thing his apostles thought worth giving at all) was written in the Church for centuries. Nobody dared to treat of Christ's humanity as real and as containing what we most needed to know and consider. But how is it now? It is the treatises about his divinity, then produced by the hundred, that have ceased to be written, while the humanity of Jesus has burst upon the world in hundreds of works, none earlier than this century, and most of them not twenty years old. His divinity is now sought in his

humanity. The Church, out of the Roman fold, is intensely busy in tracing every footstep, word, motion of Jesus, and showing the glory he sheds upon our humanity, which he wore divinely. True, most of these lives are based upon the deity shrouded in Christ; but it is his human life — his human heart and thought and moral life — in which they see it breaking out. It is plain enough what is coming. The divine *behind* the human will answer for a time; the next step will be the divine *in* the human, or, nothing more divine than the human, seeing that God's highest powers and characteristics are the human, the rational, the moral, and that in man, as in God, the divine and human are one, and that it is the animal or beastly that we are to battle with, and all we have to battle with, every scrap of the truly human being divine.

But in nothing is the utter reversal of religious tendency seen more plainly than in the view of the connection between the present and the future life, which is undergoing a most beneficent change. It was a sort of blasphemy, while human nature lay under the ban of the Church, to think of the future life as having any organic connection with, or any natural growth out of, this life. This life was, it is true, a place of probation; but it was only to try the question of obedience or non-obedience to a test creed, or to the Church, and to settle the question of welcome or repulse at the gates of heaven. But the notion that the future life had the relation of a second volume to the first in a well-told history,

or of the fruit to the flower, or of maturity to youth, or of an advanced intellect to its earlier studies, — was of course forbidden to those who thought this a fallen world, nature a ruin, life a house of detention of various criminals more or less hopeful of pardon or expectant of condemnation at the next assizes. A feeling that flesh and blood were things evil of themselves; that all our natural appetites were depraved; that the pleasure we had in life was stolen and suspicious; that life was a pilgrimage and a battle only; that nothing here which was pleasant was really worthy or under divine approbation; that all our business and our human affections and our enjoyment of air, and motion, and scenery, and music, and art, and humor, were more or less tainted with diabolic origin, — all this atrabilious faith actually forbade any disposition to think the future life could be any continuance of this, as a history continues the personality of its characters and shows us, volume after volume, the identical persons, not altered by time or change of place, except in growth and accommodation to new circumstances.

The old interpretation of immortality was most incredible and uninteresting. It predicted a new and vast experience almost without connection with our present selves. Men doubted whether even memory was to enter into it; whether they would know themselves or each other. It was to be attended with such a tremendous wrench that a complex, growing being, hitherto dependent for his

interest in life on a strict personal identity, on the acquisition of knowledge, the development of reason and experience, would be utterly broken off from all his past and present, perfected on the instant, put into measureless happiness, no longer to know a temptation, struggle, or sorrow, nor to regret, or pine, or plead over the lost friends he had left, or who had gone the wrong way; with no work, except playing a harp, no thought but of maudlin love for a Saviour, no speech but hosannas; with no variety of occupation, no continuance of old studies, no interest in the unexplored universe he had left on the very threshold of his curiosity; with no family, no home, no eyes or ears, no body — a spirit, invisible to himself, floating about or darting like lightning from one end of heaven to the other, in an empty, useless monotony of psalm-singing and worship in set rings around the Almighty and his Lamb.

I will not say this uninviting notion has wholly passed away. It did a great deal to neutralize the hope of immortality by destroying the desire for it. Such a future seemed unwelcome and incredible to courageous hearts that saw what gave value to life here. It is passing away, and it is passing because the only really instructive prophecy or forelook we have into the future life must be gained by carefully studying the present. While that was considered profane, its testimony was disowned. But now we are beginning to see that matter, the very basis of our central organization, is indestructible

and eternal; that we have no longer any expectation of getting anywhere, or at any time, beyond matter or away from it, and that it must enter just as certainly into any future state as it does into this. This at once changes the whole basis of our anticipations. If matter, then organization, then bodies, then homes, then society, then occupations; and if these, then, minds and bodies both being interested and both in some way carried along together, a strict individuality; a revived and all-important memory; a close connection between life here and there, and between ourselves here and there. And, finally, if all this rise by addition, by carrying forward what is special, most worthy and interesting, instead of leaving all that is most human in our graves, be true, then behold a larger and more truly human state, mortality swallowed up of life!

I fully believe that all innocent and fond joys and tastes, all that is sweetest and richest in society, all that is most glorious in outward nature and to the senses, all edifying studies and pursuits, all noble emulations, all possible varieties of life, all inconceivable chances of occupation, all labors of love and mercy, all æsthetic tastes and scientific investigations, are pursued in heaven. It is even not so vain a thought as it has been deemed, which the gentle Follen and many other saints have had,—that horses, dogs, and other animals have an immortality suited to their capacities. I am not sure we shall not need them and have them — resurrection men, on resurrection horses, followed by resurrection dogs; for

there may be hunting-grounds there as well as here for immortal game, pursued by immortal huntsmen, on immortal steeds. Let us not dehumanize and cheapen and vulgarize this glorious hope by cutting it down to suit undertakers and parish-beadles, or priests, pagan or Christian. This bugbear Death, bridge-keeper over the straits, the narrow straits that separate us from the mainland, must be deposed from his scarecrow melancholy and stripped of his motley hatband and weepers.

Life is neither here nor there intended to be always grave and solemn. There are songs and smiles, yes, and laughing, in heaven; a place for humor and jest as well as for prayer and praise. I doubt not they have week days and Sundays in some form there, and ministers and congregations. One thing is as sure as immortality itself, — reason and conscience hold over and are the common currency of both countries. We need not expect to get away from our problems or temptations, or even from our trials, for they are human and divine. We are not going into idleness, to be kept in a spiritual clover we do not earn and deserve. I advise each and every one of you to make up his mind that the chief questions of duty, discipline, veracity, truth, honor, temper, spirit, gentleness, fidelity, are not temporary and to be finished up and done with here. They are permanent, eternal questions, to be adjourned from earth to heaven! We cannot escape the intellectual and moral laws of God in our nature. If we go ourselves to heaven, we shall carry our nature; if

our nature, these questions. This it is that gives such solemnity with such majesty and richness to life, to death, and to immortality.

I believe no small part of the alleged decline of faith in God, in immortality, in Christ, is simply a blessed abandonment of the irrational, gloomy, profane views on these subjects long forced upon men, and that it is preparatory to the rise and the hearty welcome of a faith that human nature will feel to be congenial because it honors humanity as God's own handiwork, pronounced good by him at the start.

These beautiful festal days are far more in the real temper of true religion than our fasts and gloomy seasons. What a testimony to the rising faith is the use of flowers on our altars, the decoration of our rural cemeteries, the relaxation of the old Sunday austerities, the commingling of domestic and social pleasures with our rest and worship! What a place have children come to take in our churches! Their spirits and native gayety were once and long deemed too profane for places of worship; much less for any hope that from early youth they could be trained to find piety attractive, Jesus a winsome friend, and God a real Father! What wonder the Ancient Church had to invent a Mother of God, a Madonna, to soften the fearful severity of God's face and cover her dreadful doctrines with all sorts of wrappings taken from the human nature she denounced! Ah, brethren, if we only knew it, there is nothing so beautiful as religion, nothing

so sweet and fragrant! God is as lovely as he is holy; as tender as true. Death is slowly losing its terrors as we learn to see its beneficent mission. When Science comes under the same roof with Faith, Humanity will learn to abate most of the mistakes and premature losses that now render God's providence so dark. Children will not be born only — half of them — to die in infancy. Human life will become subservient to laws which will be no longer regarded as less than holy. This world will grow into a fit ante-chamber and robing-room for the larger world, to which it is as the chapel of a vast cathedral. I anticipate discoveries that will render life more peaceful, less rugged and laborious, with more leisure, more culture, more joy; and I believe that when the senseless abuse of human powers and faculties has subsided, we shall, by the calm and lofty use of our nature, see into the future and know many things, and become assured of many things, now considered beyond our reach. Man, who has weighed and measured the fixed stars, and bound the zones and hemispheres together with his iron scarf, cannot stop with physical triumphs. He is going to scale the skies with his soul, and discover, with a certainty that his cravings prophesy, enough to make him a joyful heir of eternity and a son who knows his Heavenly Father! Faith is not the opposite of knowledge, but the knowledge that comes by the use and exercise of the spiritual senses; and those senses will, ere long, have their optic and aural science, and learn to put moral telescopes

and moral telephones to their inward eye and ear, which will make assurance doubly sure of God and of immortality.

O Jesus! blessed liberator from tyrannical fears and stupors, we hail Thee on this glorious resurrection morning! And following thee we see and hail the spirits of the just made perfect, hovering near and looking over the horizon into this world which they, like thee, loved and served! And who so near thee, O Christ, as those who have made thee human and intelligible; have taken off the crown of thorns and crowned thee with light and love? As near as any I seem to descry that mighty yet gentle apostle of love and liberty, of faith in man as the only condition of any intelligent knowledge of God, the free-minded, all-hoping, ever-onward Channing; and on his face, Holy Saviour, thy smile rests! For who has done so much to make thee known as thou art to this age, and in whom has dwelt more mightily the power of thy resurrection?

XXII.

THE COMMON FAITH.

After the common faith.

TITUS i. 4.

THERE was a common faith in Paul's time, in spite of the many differences of opinion which the disputes of the New Testament plainly show, and which Paul's Epistles not only admit but are examples of; but none the less a common faith, — that is, certain universally or generally received ideas and convictions, which constituted a ground and substance of agreement and mutual understanding and sympathy among Christians. Doubtless Christians differed then, as they have ever since, in proportion to their intelligence, freedom of speculation, temperaments, and experiences, and often upon questions of serious but not vital importance. Ecclesiastical history, from the days of Eusebius, has been largely occupied with the heresies or sectarian differences of equally earnest and devout men. It is a mistake to suppose that even the Roman Catholic Church, repressive of intellectual liberty and departure from its own standards and authority as it is, has been at any time able to maintain a complete unanimity, or

has not had as many shades and colors in its seamless robe as there were in Joseph's coat. Its unity has been in the acknowledgment of its *authority* verbally to decide disputed questions, rather than in the real inward agreement it has been able to maintain among its children. Yet there has been a common faith among them. I believe that freedom of speculation and respect for private judgment is the true road to unity and a larger and sweeter harmony of opinion. For it is just as true of Christianity and of religious faith as it is of science or art, that the only sure and permanent basis of agreement among men is *the truth.* The truth is not something that men agree to call truth; it has a real existence: and the great interest of humanity in all departments is to find out what this truth is. The more freedom of inquiry, the more various the seekers, and the more earnest and exacting their search, the sooner the truth in all things is likely to be discovered; and when discovered, truth has its own evidence, which, in spite of all prejudices and prepossessions, tends rapidly to convince and to bring all disputants into agreement. It is what is true in science and art and morals and faith that finally wins a consent that may be said to be irresistible. What should we think of the policy of discouraging independent, bold, and searching investigations into the laws of nature, into the principles of art, into the theory of government, into the foundations of morals? Do these investigations tend to produce diversity of opinion, or to

bring about substantial agreement? They all finally end in demonstrating truths which, after due question, conquer falsehoods or defective theories, drive diversity of opinion out of the field, and plant universal conviction and essential agreement among men.

It is no misfortune to Christianity that it has created innumerable sects and been a theme of infinite diversity. If there had not all the while been a common faith, due to certain real, manifest, and indisputable truths in it and of it, it would not have maintained itself even as a ground of difference and disputation for eighteen centuries. Nothing that had not essential life and truth in it could have so surrounded itself with discussion, have maintained for ages the chief place of interest, and made itself the battle-ground of opinion. And it is certain that these disputes and sectarian divisions have been the chief means of attracting attention to what was not or could not be disputed, and so have made the substance of the common faith more visible and more sure. I propose to ask what this common faith is; what really influential, strengthening, useful ideas associated with, derived from, or gaining importance and practical force from, Christianity are really in the common possession of the civilized world; what has survived question, passed out of controversy, become the common currency of society. I do not mean to consider what agreement we have in written creeds, or to confine myself to what is taught in churches, or what is agreed upon among professed theologians.

Nor, in my view, is there any important difference to be recognized between professing and non-professing Christians, or between those with one theory or another theory of revelation, inspiration, or the literary history of the records of Jesus' life. Disputes continue, and will continue, much longer on these points. I want to know what is generally and influentially and commonly received among people born and brought up in Christian countries, no matter what else they differ about. When they differ, it must of course be about what cannot be justly called the common faith; and it is only the common faith that I am looking for.

In the first place, we have a phrase in very general use, "the Christian world," which must mean something. It is an undisputed phrase and an intelligible one. It includes Romanists and Protestants, people of all varieties of opinion touching secondary theories of faith. It is a world which has come into existence since Christianity was born, and it is coincident and coextensive with the nations over which Christianity has a characteristic sway. It is a term which, territorially considered, grows wider every day, and which historians and thinkers show no disposition to give up, and which they see no occasion to define with any new care, as if it meant any more or less than it has meant since Christianity became the faith of the Roman Empire. The existence and general and persistent use of such a term proves the reality of a common faith, be it more or less, be it this or that. Again, we talk, without question or

consciousness of unintelligibleness, of Christian nations, knowing very well that no nation is composed of thoroughly good, moral, and holy people, and that we are not characterizing their actual conduct, but only their common faith; and we do it without regard to the prevalence of the Greek, the Roman, the Anglican, the Lutheran, the Congregational creeds or disciplines. In the midst of these nations, too, wars, jails, crimes, vices, doubts, and infidels exist; but none the less we call them Christian nations. Should we do so if we did not feel that a certain common faith existed or prevailed in these nations, which, not merely in theory, but in fact, made itself respected and felt in their policy and conduct through the steady pressure of ideas and convictions flowing from a Christian source?

Again, we all talk of Christianity — no matter what our particular position may be on the long gamut from Rome to Geneva — as a common faith. The Romanist and the ultra-Protestant have one religion, — it is Christianity. They agree upon something fundamental enough to give its name to the system. The trunk of the tree is common property; it is only about the branches or twigs that there is any claim to exclusive ownership or preference.

Now the question is, What is this common faith? And here I propose to leave out of view the eccentric class of thinkers, and also what has and can have no reference to conduct and plainly does not touch the vital interests of life. There are plenty of nice and curious questions which scholars, dialecticians,

and theologians pass their lives in discussing, and not unprofitably, because at least they sharpen their wits, burnish their scholastic armor, and employ their innocent leisure. But the great mass of busy, observing, thinking people at the school of common life never know anything about them or care anything for them. I think we can safely drop them out of view. What, then, is the common faith?

1. The common faith believes that with Jesus Christ began a new era of hope and life for humanity, and that it is not without reason that we date our epoch from his birth. It believes that Jesus Christ sustained peculiar, exceptional, indissoluble relations with God, and that his name, his precepts, his life, his spirit, his death, are intimately, sacredly, and gloriously connected with the salvation of men. It believes that Jesus is the Christ, and that the Christ is the name for God's anointed son. I am not talking of what men *profess* to believe, but only of what they *do* believe. And after deducting all that is local, sectarian, peculiar, theological, theoretical, ineffective, I find this common faith to have established itself in the Christian world and to be shared by men in general, irrespective of their churches, creeds, or even their shades of character or schools of thought. I do not see a whit's difference in respect to this article of faith among Catholics and Protestants, Trinitarians and Unitarians, theologians and the common people. Of course it is connected with various theories of ontology, affirmation of miracles or denial of miracles, assertion

of Christ's pre-existence or of his natural birth, of Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy or the outcome of original spiritual genius, with different notions of revelation and inspiration, different conceptions of the divine plan in raising up many spiritual leaders in different ages, or only one; but under all lies the acknowledgment of Christ's having established a new and transcendent epoch in man's spiritual history, and of his being himself the leading factor in our moral destiny. Men may differ about the origin, purpose, and intention of the Pyramids; but there they are, and they cannot be got rid of. It is very much so with Christ's place and influence in history. It is a fact. There he is at the entrance of modern history, the creator and inspirer of a new life for humanity; a personage too grand, sacred, and influential to be overlooked, to be overthrown, to be treated with anything but reverence. Modern doubters or deniers of his miracles or his supernatural origin, men like Strauss, Renan, Mill, are just as much impressed with the magnitude, sublimity, and sacredness of his figure as the most implicit believers in his divine mission. Indeed, in some sense they are compelled to magnify his personal genius, his sublime insight, his very character, to account for the hold he got upon his time and upon human fortunes. If he was not inspired, sent supernaturally, then he was a greater genius than Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare; for he invented and illustrated truths that belong to the highest sphere of thought and experience in a man-

ner so perfect, that nineteen centuries have not been able, with all our progress, to add anything to the ideal man he was, or to the religious faith he taught and personated.

2. The common faith believes in the God and Father of Jesus Christ as the sole and eternal God; and this covers his unity, his moral perfection, his spirituality, and his fatherhood. The God of the common faith is not Jehovah, is not merely the First Cause, is not the God of science, or philosophy, or speculation, is not the Pantheist's God, or the Theist's God. He is not Father Jove, or Grandfather Saturn; but he is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Christ is the lens through which Christendom sees God. All that is affecting, comforting, awing, and directing in the divine person, character, and will is derived from the irresistible habit the Christian world has formed of associating Jesus Christ with God, interpreting God's character by Christ's, looking at God in and through Jesus. Whether this be a necessity or a good fortune, a part of the divine plan or a happy instinct of humanity; whether it be founded in a supernatural authority, or only in a natural evolution,—no candid observer can deny the fact that the Christian world worships, loves, fears, follows the God and Father of Jesus Christ. It matters not what the theories of Jesus' origin or authority may be, high or low, natural or miraculous; the fact remains, that the God and Father Jesus revealed, naturally or supernaturally, has become the God and Father of the Christian world,

and that he is a different being from any known before Christ's time, to any but exceptional souls who had no power to communicate their secret if they had it. That Jesus Christ should have been such a person that the world has been universally ready to accept his character as the type, reflex, or perfect image of God's own, and that it should have found in Christ a tenderness, mercy, purity, impartiality, and sympathy that has at length made the Almighty God he represents seem a father, friend, a being with human yearnings, personal affection, loving, and to be loved, — is one of the most certain and one of the most glorious triumphs, as it is one of the most characteristic features, of the common faith. Study the hymns of the Christian world from the Romish Breviary to the Rationalistic Psalter, and see how fully, unmistakably Jesus Christ is accepted as the revelation of the Father, and how truly it is said, He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. Do not confound this great admission or affirmation with any theological theory about the nature of Christ; this is like raising a question about the nature of the telescope that brings a hitherto invisible planet into full view. Whoever or whatever Jesus was, God or man, natural or supernatural, he has revealed God, the God of Christendom. It is conceivable that in other states of being, larger, purer, vaster conceptions of God may arise; but meanwhile, here and now the common faith accepts Jesus' view of God without regard to theories of his own nature. If there be any minor differences among

Christians in regard to God's person, character, temper, they are not due to different sources, but to the more or less thoughtful acquaintance men have made with Jesus, who can never be fully known except as he is revealed by sympathy and the reproduction of his spirit in their own. Many are equally disciples of Christ who are in very different stages of pupilage — disciples who know the heart of Jesus, know God, and have no more doubts of his character than if they had seen him with the outward eye.

3. The common faith accepts the *spirit* of Jesus Christ as peculiar, in its demands on human character, in requiring self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, meekness, humility, forgiveness of injuries, devotion to the common good, protection of the weak, relief of the suffering, preference of death to denial of his name or shame done his cause. Indeed, the popular view of what constitutes the Christian spirit and life — the common faith — is really a rebuke to the highest practical living. Nothing comes up to it; and in this it is wonderfully true to the real genius of Christianity. For Jesus Christ incarnated the ideal by some wondrous gift of God or nature. He caught it down from the unreachable sky, the region of poetry and romance, where it had hitherto dwelt, fixed it in an humble, lowly life, embodied it in flesh and blood, warmed it with veritable mother's milk, and lived it in actual every-day life and history. In this respect the common faith justifies the definition which the author of "Ecce Homo" has given

of Christianity, — as "an enthusiasm for humanity." There is no difference between believers in human depravity and the native corruption of human nature, and the most hearty believers in its original and still latent dignity, rectitude, and glory, in respect of their inner meaning. One says man has fallen away from God; the other says man is far away from God, without having fallen there: but both recognize his distance from him to be the same. It is the soul itself that pronounces sentence on its own corruption: an inverted form of showing its real dignity. Both mean to emphasize one fact, — the imperfect, partial, unsatisfactory state of men, spiritually considered. One calls it organic corruption; the other calls it functional infirmity and disease. One calls man's nature a ruin, the other an unbuilt temple; but both agree that immediate, resolute, and persistent efforts are to be made to build or rebuild it upon the model of Jesus Christ's life and character. One characterizes man by that which comes first in him, — his animal nature, which is selfish, passionate, sensual, earthly, and if undirected, devilish; and thinks this a result of the fall of Adam. The other characterizes man by his rational or spiritual nature, which involves the exercise of free-will and moral feeling, and regards what is *animal* — the universal in man — as not essentially *human*, and its presence as no evidence of corruption and no departure from the original plan. But both agree that the animal nature — the carnal man — must be subdued, and that it is only by a great

struggle that the victory can be won. One says only God's spirit can effect this; the other says, True! but reason and conscience are God's spirit. But both agree that the real man is regenerated in Christ, inasmuch as our first birth is fleshly and animal, and our second birth — if we have it — is unto the life of the soul, which practically owes its victory to Christ's Gospel. The common faith, then, is really fully agreed in believing that man needs conversion, regeneration; and the differences are purely modal, or pertain to names and methods. The common faith expects men somehow, by Christian methods, to be changed into the likeness of God as it appeared in Jesus Christ, so far as making him, in his precepts and spirit, the model of character can produce this result. Do I intend to affirm that the common faith denies the Christian name to all who are not like Christ? No; but only to all who will not acknowledge that they ought to be like him, and are trying, or trying to try, to become like him. It is a question of direction. Those whose faces are set as if they would go to Jerusalem, though just started, are of the same company with those just in view of its gates. The Christian world in its common faith broadly distinguishes self-abandoned, soul-despising, self-seeking, blaspheming, Christ-denying men and women from God-adoring, Christ-honoring, duty-loving people, however infirm their purpose, however poor their fruit, however unsuccessful their efforts; and in this they equally adopt the gospel distinction between sinners

and saints. Sinners are sinners who love to be sinners and mean to be sinners; saints are sinners who wish to be saints and mean to be saints. Sinners love sin, and are sinners indeed. Saints love righteousness, and are sinners only by infirmity, ignorance, and accident. The common faith recognizes the distinction clearly; and it will never be obliterated, because it is real on any theory and the same in all churches and under all creeds.

Finally, the common faith is a faith in immortality! Christianity cannot exist where death is believed to be the end of man; for men who believe that, not only lose their sense of God, but very soon their faith in moral distinctions. Atheists and secularists have in individual cases been pure and good men; but their doctrines tend to make men thoughtless, sensual, cruel, and reckless. The Christian world has had sense enough and experience enough to know this, and the common faith dreads and expels as not of its own household all those who deny immortality. To fear, or to have anxious doubts or misgivings about what death will do with us, is both natural and perhaps inevitable in thoughtful spirits; but to deny the future life and to make a glory of asserting and propagating the doctrine of the soul's mortality is felt to be heartless, cruel, unchristian, and to show a sad decay of spiritual instinct. The common faith repels with horror this conclusion; and it is to be encouraged in maintaining the glorious confidence which Jesus Christ has inspired in a truth which can hardly be said to be either natural or

unnatural,— the soul's escape in the grave's triumph over the body. There are analogies for it and against it. It is neither positively affirmed nor positively denied by nature. It rests, so far as it is a positive and influential article of the common faith, on Christianity, — I will not say on the resurrection exclusively, but on the whole testimony, spirit, implication of the Christian religion. Strike the immortal hope out of the Christian system, and it becomes a ruin from turret to foundation-stone. Strike this hope out of the common faith and trust of Christendom, and the whole glory, significance, and beauty of life were smitten as with a blight, and the verdure of home and heart blackened as by the smooch of an untimely frost. Here more than in any other article may the common faith be said to be vitally established, and to have sunk into the very core of Christian civilization. Am I asked if men calling themselves Christians live as it becomes those who are expecting immortality? Few perhaps; but then how would they live if they did not expect it? I believe few live without expecting it, and without its having a steady, subtile, and profound effect upon their characters.

Let us pause here. We have seen enough to justify us in saying that Christians have a common faith, a faith which is peculiar, vital, influential, sacred, sustaining, and that sectarian divisions and disputes do not touch it or disintegrate it. Let it enlarge our charity, let it confirm our confidence. We have a religion, and it is a common religion.

We go to different places of worship, but we worship the same God; we define Christ differently, but we own one Saviour; we have dissimilar notions of the terms of salvation, but we all recognize holiness and virtue as the goal of our efforts. Let us prize the common faith and make it the basis of our conduct and the ground of our fellowship. Let Christians unite in a common effort to elevate humanity and bless the world by exalting the name, teachings, and authority of Jesus Christ as the widely accepted revealer of God's will, God's character, God's love for humanity, and God's purpose to raise man above the power of sin and death, and give him a holy immortality.

XXIII.

THE DISTINCTIVE MISSION OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 8.

SAINT PAUL was urging in this letter to the Corinthian Church the duty of plain speaking in religious things. He discouraged the use of words that were not intelligible because used in an occult and puzzling way. He maintained the importance of clear distinctions, definite and precise statements of opinion and convictions, in words easy to be understood. He would not have ideas confounded by the employment of equivocal phrases, accepted in one sense by some, and in another sense by others, leaving an impression of agreement where there was really none. And he sums up his argument at last with an illustration which has all the force of a demonstration, — "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" The trumpet is still used in camp and barracks for publishing various and quite different orders. It calls men in one strain to rise from their pallets; in

another, to go for their rations; in another, to assemble for drill or parade; and in still another, to prepare themselves to go into battle. With the foe just discovered and quite ready to rush upon them, how dangerous to blow the trumpet with such an uncertain sound that the army knows not whether it is called to some peaceful part of camp-routine, or is summoned to seize its bucklers and spears and array itself against the enemy?

When war was even a larger part of life than it is in our day, — large, alas! as it is now, — the comparison between the duties of the Christian life and the profession of arms was more natural and apt. The Old and New Testaments are full of images drawn from the soldier's life and struggles in the field. I need not quote the familiar illustrations of this usage. You know how the tactics and the dreadful passions of embattled foes have entered into religion and its controversies; how Catholic and Protestant, Orthodox and Heterodox, have contended together with hatreds sharper than the sword. Happily there has been in our generation a great abatement of the odious enmities and bitter invectives of Christian sects. The relations of differing sects have become not only more decent, but even more charitable. Religious persecution has ceased in civilized lands to be supported by the civil powers and by the sword, although it lingers in semi-barbarous Russia and Turkey, and not only among Mohammedans and heathen. Yet it is not because the differences of opinion among Christians have ceased to be great

and important, but only that the world, and above all the Christian world, is beginning to understand that the interests of religious truth cannot be promoted by passions and acts forbidden by the spirit of the Gospel. Good ends are not to be advanced by bad means. We are not permitted to do evil that good may come. And, indeed, just as long as stormy and contagious passions were aroused by the doctrinal disputes of Christians, the very outlines of the opinions they were seeking to promulgate were exaggerated or blurred and lost sight of in the dust they raised in battling over them.

Calmness, candor, the love of truth for its own sake, are necessary conditions of any successful sight of its simplicity and definiteness. Bad blood clouds the eyes; anger blinds. Men in a passion strike wildly, and wound themselves and the very truth they are moved to defend or advance. There could be no considerable progress in the theory of religion or the doctrinal statements of the Church so long as the spirit of war, which is characteristically one of hatred and contagious passions, entered into the argument. No bloody battle over any important dogma has ever advanced the truth, and no controversy of a bitter and sectarian kind has ever settled any theological dispute. The only method that really clears up and helps to define opinions in religion is transparent clearness of statement, made in the sole interest of truth, with real love towards those who maintain even the opposite, an honest attempt to understand their difficulties and

the grounds of their contrary opinions, a careful abstention from the imputation of bad motives to those who maintain antagonistic views, and an entire elimination of personal passions from the argument.

This method of dealing with the disputed opinions of Christendom may be said to have become possible, or at any rate comparatively easy, only within very recent times. And it is not very creditable to the Church, or to theologians, that it should have been inaugurated, not by them, but by philosophers and scientists. The rigorous necessity of candor, proof, and frankness, under which truth-seekers in the other great domains of knowledge have been compelled to pursue their investigations, each held in check by an ever-increasing corps of rival inquirers, by whom nothing is now regarded with more contumely than deceit, exaggeration, concealment, claims to unsupported priority of discovery, or failure to do ample justice to others' services, — this noble example of modern *savans*, historians, physicists, has at length touched the dull conscience of sectarians in religion and inspired them with a new sense of the value of unadulterated truth and of the obligation to state the results of Biblical studies, or inquiries into Christian evidences, or the history of opinions, with a conscientious accuracy, a cautious weighing of testimony, and a fairness of statement that have done more in the last twenty years to diminish controversies, to humble wilful and exaggerated confidence in one-

sided opinions, and to promote the real knowledge of God and of Christ, as well as the good understanding of Christians with each other, than all the old partisan and sectarian battles of a thousand years, fought blindly and passionately on both sides, in the spirit of apologists or advocates, each only for its own side, and not both for the truth, the interests of humanity, and the glory of God.

There is danger, however, that the love of peace and the distaste for vigorous controversy for the truth may betray gentle and indolent natures into some unfaithfulness to the light which has shone into their minds and hearts. So much is said in our day about the beautiful spirit and temper of Christianity and its paramount or exclusive importance, that many are tempted to think that this temper and spirit have no dependence at all on definite conceptions of God's character and his dealings with humanity; that if charity — meaning mutual toleration — prevails, we have the last result of religious faith, and need trouble ourselves very little about opinions. Now there is serious truth, as well as serious error, in this conclusion. No wise and enlightened Christian will hesitate to put the spirit of truth above Bodies of Divinity. Millions are wiser than their creeds, and hold in solution in their hearts what they vainly think they hold crystallized in their heads. They inwardly believe what their pure and tender and generous spirits prompt them to believe, while they profess what they have been taught it is their duty and safety to profess,

without any consciousness of the illogical and contradictory relation of their supposed opinions to their essential faith. It is fortunate that the spirit of religion keeps so much in advance of the theology of the Christian world; that the heart is so much wiser than the head; and that the great majority of Christians, having neither time nor training sufficient to investigate opinions independently, are yet not compelled to take everything on trust, as they must their creeds. They have, even the humblest of them, direct and personal relations with God if they will; they have a moral and spiritual nature, which love and fear are always enlightening. They deal with living men and women and children, and cannot be really so very much mistaken about their nature, as having excellent qualities in it, let them call it wholly depraved and lost as they may. They are in God's world and under his providence, and they cannot fail to have some just and true thoughts about his will and his disposition, no matter what they may say about them, or even think they believe. Of one thing we may be sure, — men and women have no more and no other faith than that they show in their lives; and we can judge much more accurately what they think about God and man, about life and immortality, about virtue and piety, from what they *do*, than from what they say, from what they *are*, than from what they profess. And this statement is not meant to be a disparaging one; for men and women, as a rule, are better than their word. They have, for they show, more faith and more

virtue than they can themselves account for by any statement of their opinions. The talking, dogmatic, professing part of the world is, after all, only a class, — a considerable class, — whose affirmations and pretences, whose alleged beliefs, are often very far ahead of anything they prove themselves truly to think and believe by the manner and spirit of their lives. System-makers and theologians may easily deceive themselves as to the importance of their work as definers of truth. Living experience is a far more active agent, and settles the practical question of beliefs much more certainly.

If any one wished to know what was believed in the American Church to-day, it would be a much shorter way to the truth to inquire in what manner and by what spirit the people were living, than what were their written creeds and professions, what the Church statistics vouched for, or the number of Church members indicated. The American people or Church really believes only what it actually practises. If it believes in God's holiness and infinite hatred of sin, you will see it in its careful avoidance of what must arouse his terrible displeasure. If it believes in God's omniscience and omnipresence, in his actual knowledge of what is going on in every human heart, behind the doors of every man's house, in the recesses of his factory and counting-room and between the lines of his ledger or day-book, in his private conversations with his peers and in his very thoughts, surely it will give unmistakable signs of a faith so solemn and glori-

ous. If it believes in man's immortal destiny and a judgment to come which is to settle every soul's fate for eternity, it will not trifle with such an awful conviction. When men really believed that the priests of the Church held the keys of heaven and hell, and that acquiescence and public confession of the Church creed was the faith that saved, they left no uncertainty in their conduct as to what they believed. They lived up to their creed. True, it was comparatively easy to do it, because it was faith in a visible power, and public acquiescence in a fixed creed administered by a hierarchy that had generally the power to enforce it. True, it did not produce moral and charitable living; that was not its object. It had a very definite object, and one then credible, — to save souls from an impending curse and endless ruin by submission to the authority and the articles of faith warranted by the Church as true. Men could believe, by inherited accumulation of acquiescence, the old Roman Catholic doctrine; and they showed plainly enough, as they do now in millions of humble believers, not only that they believed, but just what they believed. Some natural saints believe the doctrine of the Mass and a great deal besides which is beautiful and true, and they show just what they believe. I have had Roman Catholic servants in my own house, gross in their superstition and abject in their faith, who were yet by the native beauty of their souls positive ensamples of the loveliest graces of character. They believed in their Church, and plainly showed in parts

of their lives what they believed; but they believed in God and goodness by a much more sure title, and they just as plainly showed their faith by their works in this direction.

I wish neither to underrate nor to exaggerate the importance of definite and accurate statements of Christian faith. No wise man can pretend that Christian character or living faith is chiefly dependent upon them, or is not often wholly independent of them. People live pure, holy, useful lives without definite theological opinions, although not without earnest and active beliefs, held in a spiritual solution in their hearts and dispositions; and men's beliefs are to be inferred and known by their temper and conduct far more than by their propositional creeds or intellectual statements of opinion. But every one must confess that every consenting faculty of our nature adds to the force of any conviction hitherto shared by the other powers. The affections alone are themselves adequate to move the man in a religious direction; but how much more energetically he moves if his will is trained and disciplined to enforce his nobler impulses! If his conscience adds its authority to his affections, and backs his will, how powerful a combination is already formed! But now let his intellect sharply distinguish, define, perceive, acknowledge the truth to itself of the impulses, the motives, the obligations already dimly or vaguely felt, so that he has the whole consent of his nature in his beliefs and aspirations, and who can for a moment doubt

the great advantage gained, the rich and glorious addition made to the power of his religious life? And then what a blighting, weakening, and even demoralizing thing it is, not merely to have an unemployed and unexercised reason in our religious faith, but what is worse, to have the intellect, so far as it is active at all, in conflict with the ideas and statements of belief which, for the heart's sake, or by mere force of will, or perhaps only by indolent acquiescence, or through pious hopes and fears, have become professed articles of faith!

For a long time ideas of God and his providence, of man in his origin and destiny, of Christianity and its purport, were current and accepted whose claims to a divine authority were actually thought to be strengthened and substantiated by their acknowledged unacceptableness to human reason, or even their incongruity with it. Warburton, in his Divine Legation of Moses, rested his argument for the inspiration of Moses upon the strange absence of the doctrine of immortality (believed from the earliest ages elsewhere) from the Pentateuch. If man had written these books, this doctrine would have been there. It is absent; so God must have written them! In the same spirit human reason protests against the theory of the fall of our whole race by the sin of Adam, — a curse pronounced against myriads of his unborn posterity; against the condemnation to hopeless and eternal misery of the unfortunate victims of their own ignorance in heathen lands; against an absolute election and predestination of some to

endless bliss, and of many more to everlasting agony; against three persons in one God; against a moral salvation secured by bargain, a bloody ransom, a purchase and sale of merits, an exchange of punishment from the guilty to the innocent. But the irrational fear of God — not of his holiness and goodness, which furnish a reasonable ground of fear as well as of love, but of his power and sovereignty — actually led strong and earnest men to say and to believe, in ages not long past, that such irrational articles of faith were specially designed to *humble* reason; that their incredibleness to reason was one of the very conditions of their value and one of the stoutest proofs of their divine origin; that they were not addressed to the judging power or faculty, to which all other truth appeals, but to the principle of faith; and that it became a test of Christian humility to accept them implicitly, and all the more so if they oppugned and flouted the understanding. This sentiment reached its apotheosis when the Catholic saint boldly said, "I believe it because it is impossible."

It is not too much to say that the long and only too successful efforts to dissociate religious faith from reason and place it on airy foundations of a sentimental kind, or on the pure authority of the Church or of the Bible, have in the last few centuries been the source of the great revolts of which the Reformation, the French Revolution, scientific atheism, utilitarian morality, secularism, communism, nihilism, are the more or less deformed children. The

wronged and injured Reason of humanity has in effect said: "You would make God the tyrant of human fortunes and fate. We will settle that question with you, but not by any compromise. We abandon and reject the very idea of God. You have said that reason has no place in religion. We meet you by affirming that religion has no place in reason; and while you will have no reason, we will have no religion. You would stifle us with mystery and what you call faith; we will believe in nothing we cannot see and handle, and we even deny that there *is* any soul to be the subject of your repugnant theories." Ah! it will take some generations yet to reinstate Reason in the calming, reassuring place which belongs to her, not as the only or the chief factor in man's nature or in religious faith, but as the regulator of all his faculties, to which even Conscience must go to test the genuineness and purity of her edicts. The long imprisonment Reason suffered has exaggerated the use she has made of her freedom. She has hated her old jailer, Religion, and calls it superstition; her old prison, the Church; her prison diet, the Scriptures; and avenges herself by seizing every weapon that science, philosophy, or civil liberty will lend her to maim and disfigure the sacred form of faith. But this is a frenzy that cannot last; it will have its way. For let us remember that the diseases of reason, unlike those of every other faculty, are terminable within very fixed limits. "You appeal to Cæsar, and to Cæsar you shall go." You appeal to Reason, and

Reason shall confound your irrationality. Reason is the only tribunal which all men can, must, and in spite of themselves do, respect. Let the worst reasoners acknowledge Reason's authority, and their errors are doomed. Reason errs, but cannot stay in error; like a living stream, she deposits her turbidness and runs herself clear. It is for Reason to justify and define the place and the uses of all the other faculties in man. There is no more doubt of her obligation to receive and honor what is true for the heart and the conscience, as being so far true for reason, than there is that Science must admit any new metals on scientific proof of their existence, or any new evidences of an interstellar ether, if the movements of light, heat, or celestial bodies indicate it. People talk foolishly about the freedom of Reason, as if she could wander wildly round and think and believe just what she pleases. There is nothing so inexorably bound to truth and to God as Reason; she is the intellectual form of God reflected in man's nature.

We hear of the rigidity of Science; it is the rigidity of Truth we mean. Things are what they are, and Science is obliged to define them as they are, or to become outgrown and false. Reason is not what you choose or I choose; it is what God's truth has compelled man's knowing powers to be and to own. We do not hold it; it holds us. We are not its masters, but its servants. It is just as true of Reason as of Conscience that its voice is divine, — not always clear, not always articulate;

but only because it is dulled and broken with the jar of the world.

The peculiar mission of the denomination of Christians to which we belong, or of some other future body that will be more able and faithful than we are, is to maintain the reasonableness of Christian faith and to recommend it to men as their reasonable service. Our efforts in the past, not always congruous, not always self-consistent, have yet had always this distinctive quality, — they have been rationalistic. I choose the word because it has a plain, even if to many a half repugnant, sense. It is just what is most offensive in our position to our fellow-Christians of the Orthodox faith. We have reasoned about the Bible, about the divine nature, about God's obligations to his creatures, as well as about our obligations to him; we have reasoned about the nature and the precepts of Jesus, about the creeds of Christendom, about the claims of other ethnic religions. If, then, reasoning about all the so-called mysteries of faith, with the fixed determination to make Reason final arbiter and to accept as divine only what is thus justifiable, be dangerous, we cannot blame the Church for putting us on the other side of its pale and warning its disciples how they come into our company or admit us into theirs.

Our rationalism manifests itself in still other ways. We do not and cannot accept a written creed, simply because we do not know and cannot foresee what Truth, speaking by Reason, may compel us

to affirm or reject next year, or even to-morrow. We are so much more solemnly and with all our heart's consent bound to Truth by Reason than the most servile of believers is to his creed or the most docile of scripturalists to his Bible, that we are far more certain to cleave to the truth, however it may set aside old opinions, and though we know not what coming chapters of that ever-opening volume may reveal, than any disciple of Calvin to his Institutes or any follower of Paul to his Epistle to the Romans. The worst our critics say of us in this regard is not usually the worst — we call it the best — they might say. We find and we acknowledge no finality in the Scriptures, no finality in the word or person of Jesus. It is only the Truth that is our finality; and of that, Reason, because the only self-accredited representative of God, is the sole final court, subject to no earthly appeal, but ever open to the revision of the same court, and ever conscious and reverent in the acknowledgment of its finite dependence upon the Infinite God for the pardon and correction of its provisional judgments. It is plain, then, that we have no calm anchorage in any artificial port, but are afloat in the wide ocean of God. And if the divine pole-star of our spiritual reason be untrustworthy; if the vessel of the soul be not seaworthy and made for this element in which it floats; if God's revelation of himself in the reason and conscience be not an adequate one; if we are not just as much under divine care and protection at any point of latitude and longitude we may have dutifully reached

as though we were in the Heavenly Jerusalem itself, — then we are of all men most miserable. Instead of this, we find ourselves among the happiest and most favored and grateful of God's children, because we have abandoned all ideas of anything capricious, fitful, partial, or irrational in his essence, his government, or his feelings towards us. If we are honestly seeking and welcoming the truth and living it out as fast and far as we can, we are not even ashamed of our errors or limitations, nor the least unwilling to have God see them. Nor are we disturbed at the changes in our growing views, since they are always morally and intellectually compulsory. Where we do not change is in our allegiance to Truth and the God of Truth; but this loyalty frequently compels us to modify our views of the truth and sometimes to reject opinions formerly earnestly maintained.

Every one must see by what a gulf we are separated from those of our Orthodox brethren who hold in good faith the doctrine of moral cataclysms; the failure of God's original plan; the fall of man from the original uprightness of his nature and from the favor to the curse of his Maker; the introduction of monotheism by miracle only; the existence of a people, the Jews, not only raised by position, blood, and religious susceptibilities above others, but actually dearer to God, and to be served at any sacrifice of the rest; the sending of a revelation not addressed to man's experience, observation, or usual powers of judging, but bringing its

evidence in the overpowering form of a preternatural birth, the exercise of arbitrary powers over natural laws and their reversal, and in claims to a wholly exceptional nature and a divine rank. I do not wonder that sincere believers in this series of opinions are shocked and scandalized at modern Unitarianism. If they were not, it would be only because their own faith in these to us incredible ideas had been seriously shaken. How can they know the slow, painful, anxious processes by which rational Christians have extricated themselves, or rather have been driven out, from these old opinions, once common and made sacred by custom and truly religious associations? We have mostly been ourselves at some earlier or later period sharers in these provisional notions. We know their temptations and their attractions. We are ready to confess the indolent charms of a fixed authority, the comfort of a Church assuming power to forgive sins and to determine articles of faith; of a Bible that is verbally inspired and contains all truth. We acknowledge that it is fascinating to our weakness to think of a God to worship whom men have once seen and handled; of a Saviour who only asks us to trust him to do all for us that it is so hard to do for ourselves; to believe that God loves the Jew still in a peculiar manner, in the person of his son, born of a Hebrew virgin, and confines his favor to believers in him. It is pleasant to our self-love to think of all weakness, sin, and sorrow as ending with the grave for believers in Christ; of a world-

of absolute and unbroken rest for the weary who have confessed Jesus on earth, and of an entire separation of them from all the wicked. Heaven as the Church has presented it hitherto has owed a large part of its charm to the force of the contrast set off against it in hell. Can anybody believe that the sensuous, selfish, self-complacent part of our nature has not striven to hold on to these old opinions just as long as reason and conscience would allow? No mistake is greater than the very common one that liberal Christianity is a bid to man's self-indulgent and selfish part. On the contrary, it is its moral severity, its spirituality, its tax on the higher and more reluctant faculties that cause its unpopularity and make its progress necessarily slow.

What can exceed the muffled terrors of the Roman Catholic faith and its awful rigidity, except it be its wonderful adaptation to every human weakness, its taking off the whole burden of thought, the whole final responsibility of opinion and decision, the whole strain of the inner senses, to lay hold on God by supplying him in a wafer and putting a beautiful woman into the court of heaven to plead every sinner's cause? What so well adapted to comfort and soothe as a real belief that the guilty soul can lay its sins on Jesus, who has already suffered for them all, and that penitence has only to claim its full instalment of the infinite ransom that can never be exhausted? Ah! dear Orthodox friends, we are men and women like yourselves, and we know the attractions for our weaknesses, fears,

and doubts dwelling in these old and still prevalent articles of faith. We have seen men who have outgrown these old views relapsing into them because not strong enough nor brave enough to stand the rigors of rational religion. It is not our desire for an easier faith; it is our slow, painful, reluctant sense of the partiality, injustice, moral weakness, and unreality of these hopes and trusts, under the rising power of reason, fortified with new instruments of inquiry and tests of truth, that has driven us into what so many call the snows and solitudes of the rational Christian faith. Be sure, men of our way of thinking are not fonder than others of being in the minority, of braving the taunts and suspicions of the Church, of bearing the increased burdens and responsibilities of thought. We would not desert our ships and fling away our bladders and breast the ocean if the ships had not broken up under us and the bladders burst. Is there any popularity-hunting, any reward or bribe in the attitude we are compelled to take before the people? Is it not voluntarily stripped of all the aids of superstition and of all the powers of priests and rulers when we venture to lay the naked truth, as it has been revealed by the highest and ablest company of ethical and spiritual, of scientific and philosophic, explorers and experts before a prepossessed, an overwhelming majority, in whom perhaps only curiosity overcomes the reluctance to hear even our message?

But do not for a moment think that our chief

business is to pull down or destroy, that our main message is to tell you what we do not believe. It is rather to make awful and imperative the spiritual sense of a present holiness, whose mercy is justice, whose justice is mercy, who is love itself, but love clothed in truth and wisdom, — the God of the conscience, the awful but blessed Source of duty, and its eternal and incorruptible Friend and Exactor. It is to present this God of heaven and earth as here instantly present, and as inspiring, sustaining, and comforting all hearts that humbly seek and love his wisdom and grace. It is to recall your attention to that solemn, never-interrupted judgment day, which is now, and ever has been, and ever shall be, an instant, present reality; to wean you from a doctrine of capricious, uncertain, and unprovable retributions in a future life to faith in the absolute certainty of the retributive life which we are now living and always must live, since God is in us with his law and his grace, and is perpetually doing his holy will by us in making our graces sources of peace and joy (even despite pain and misappreciation, or even persecution), and our follies and sins sources of remorse or of degradation and loss.

It is to affirm the beauty and moral and spiritual authority of Jesus Christ, all the holier, sublimer, and more efficient a Saviour for having no means of saving us except God's pure and eternal truth, exemplified in a truly human, but all the more for that a divine, life. It is to affirm the glory of the Scriptures when laid broadly open and, without

claim to preternatural inspiration, considered as written by men moved by that same Holy Spirit which moves us when we are simplest, sincerest, most humble, yet most exalted, and as owing their eternal charm to their inherent truth and the natural exaltation of their authors, and not to any magical or unintelligible sources of spiritual knowledge. The veins of golden truth in that mine are imbedded in strata of honest prejudice or errors belonging to the age of the deposit. To make no distinction between the gold and the dross, the silver and the quartz or the iron, is not to sit as God himself does, as a refiner.

It is to affirm the brotherhood of men, of races, of humanity; to acknowledge the sisterhood of religions, and to be glad to recognize every jot and tittle of truth we find in any or all of them. It is to call men to repentance and newness of life by a grander unfolding of the divine gift of life, the wonders and glories that surround us in the natural world; to display the gracious opportunities of glorifying God, in the love and service of our day and generation; to fasten attention upon the corroding sins that are eating the heart out of homes and towns and cities and nations, and insist upon instant, heroic, yet humble efforts to cauterize and cure these cancerous diseases. It is to speak for the poor, the wronged, the ignorant and unfortunate, and to call men to something more than a theoretic sense of God's love for them; namely, to our being ourselves the providential messengers and servants of

that love. It is to arouse the human soul — asleep, drunken, drugged, dwarfed — to a sense of its latent capacity; to haunt it with thoughts of God; to flood it with streams of new light and life; to make its immortality a thing felt and known by the thrill and bound of its aspirations towards the eternal spirit and the eternal life. It is to frown upon pretences, hypocrisies, self-righteousness, and the artificial flowers of piety, and to make Virtue herself alive in all her beauty and all her power in daily life and conversation; and to do this without feigning any authority but that which dwells in truth and righteousness, without necromancy, preternaturalness, pretences to priestly powers, or appeals to ignorance and superstition. *To* light *by* light; to God by Godly ways; with Christ, in Christ's spirit; for righteousness, real, not imputed, not bought or borrowed, but earned by genuine service of God in the interest of humanity, — this is our mission."

Thus we blow the trumpet, anxious to have not one false or uncertain sound in it, that all who love truth, duty, goodness, God, Jesus, better than they love ease, peace, partial hopes, private prejudices, prayers at the corners of streets or being called Rabbi by men, may prepare themselves for a holy war. It is the honor and glory of God we seek; it is the second coming of Christ, not in the flesh, but in the unshrouding of his true Gospel in all its simplicity and power. We know by past experience how few will listen; but that should not discourage us. Our duty is to *speak*, and with great plainness.

The time will come, and it is coming with perilous swiftness, when millions will say, "Oh that we had known what really belonged to our peace before the reliances of old customs and old beliefs had rotted wholly away and left us without religious supports!" We offer you what, truly received, you would find to be wings, and not crutches, in the simple truths of rational Christianity!

XXIV.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH TO BE CREDITED ON THEIR MERITS.

A SERMON PREACHED ON OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, ST. LOUIS, DECEMBER, 1881.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

EPHESIANS ii. 19, 20, 21.

WE have come together to dedicate this temple to the worship of Almighty God in the name of Jesus Christ. Already it has been consecrated to that service by the meditations and prayers of many mouths; but now, its cost fully paid, you are prepared formally to give it to God, to say in this public manner, This is the Lord's house! No creditor has any claim upon it. First, we have made it fully our own, and now we freely, devoutly, joyfully give it to God for the use of his children and our offspring and successors for generations to come, that we and they may continue to bear him in grateful, obedient, and holy remembrance,

and keep his praise and service alive in the world forever.

I rejoice with you in the beauty, convenience, and fitness of the house of prayer which you have builded and now consecrate. It is unbecoming those who themselves live in ceiled houses to leave the Lord's house bare; and none of the taste and elegance we covet in our homes should be lacking in our temples of public worship. The God who built the solid earth and lifted the dome of the sky, who set up the shafts of the woods and twined them with flowers, is a God who loves beauty as well as truth and goodness. Our painted windows are copied from his sunsets, our towers and spires have their prototypes in his battlemented crags and mountain peaks, our arches suggest the aisles of his forests. Who can tell how much the beauty of the world has taught men touching the loveliness of the Divine Being? The expulsion of art and grace and color from temples of divine worship has always been accompanied with meagre and unlovely conceptions of God's character.

Justice to the Catholic Church should make us glad to confess that she has honored the divine beauty and the beauty-loving eye of man in her transcendent churches and elaborate worship, and has given to poor and rich alike a sense of possession in her ever-open and hospitable temples that has made religion dignified, gracious, and refining, as well as impartial and disregardful of human inequalities of condition. Protestantism for a time

trampled on her art and her beauty, angry with the hurtful errors in faith and practice with which they had become associated, and so made blind to their rights and charms. Puritanism quarrelled with the little beauty that earlier Protestantism had spared, and associated only ecclesiastical tyranny and frivolous formalism with whatever elegance and symbolisms survived in the English Church. Thank God, civil and religious liberty secured and the decay of ecclesiastical power evident, we are now safely reinstating much that for generations serious and earnest Christians were pulling down and pushing out. The last half century, so fruitful in freedom of opinion and so marked in the decline of priestcraft, has spent an incredible sum in erecting and beautifying churches, in sustaining costly church music, in supporting the ministry, and in enriching and diversifying the ritual of worship; and no doubt this tendency will increase with our wealth, our freedom, and our general culture. The social, the æsthetic, the ethical sides of religion have for a time doubtless superseded in interest the dogmatic and the pietistic. Clear and sharp thinkers may deplore the indifference which has come over the old scrupulous and zealous concern about articles of faith and terms of doctrine. The devout may watch with anxiety a decline in personal piety and in that principled absorption in divine things and persons which gave such strength and such severity to the religion of our fathers. But this change has not come about without excuse. It has been

an insurrection of the disfranchised parts of human nature demanding representation in the parliament of faith. Religion has lost somewhat of dignity, authority, gravity, solemnity, and unworldliness by the decline of dogmatic standards and an ascetic ideal. We have little or nothing left to match the visible saintliness of Puritan confessors, the holy aloofness of a spirituality that feared and despised the world. But what have we not gained in religious breadth, freedom, geniality, and cheerfulness? Certainly the commanding awe of God considered as absolute sovereign, or final arbiter of man's future fate, or infinite inquisitor of human consciences, or sublime original of the moral sense, with little interest beyond its realm, made an energetic, severe, and strenuous sort of religious life, of which the world has often stood, and still stands, in great need. It was comparatively easy to maintain that type of piety when the faith of Christians was shut up to a positive, fixed, verbally inspired revelation, interpreted by an official priesthood supported by the civil power, which leaned upon the Church, that in turn profited by the State's sword and purse.

But consider what great providential, unavoidable changes have come over the mind of the civilized world in the last half century in its whole attitude towards religion and religious dogmas; and by no contrivance, by no designed resistance to old forms of faith, but through the necessary influence of certain wide openings into new realms of thought, vast discoveries in science, the adoption of new

canons of historical criticism, a new acquaintance with old religions and a comparison of all with our own, the separation of Church and State, the growth of political liberty, the unlicensed printing of books, the rise of the daily newspaper, the mechanical facilities of locomotion, and the quick reverberation through the nations of the world's total experience.

So full, strong, swift has been the current of new thought, swelling over and washing the banks of the old channels of faith, that it is a sort of wonder that enough remains to justify the identification of the new with the old. Indeed the honesty and truth of this identification is formally denied by no inconsiderable class of earnest modern thinkers deeply concerned for the moral and spiritual welfare of their generation. They insist that modern light has made imperative a positive break between those who dare to receive it in its fulness, and have logic and sense enough to understand all it involves, and Christianity itself. They tell us liberal Christians that we are not Christians at all except by a metaphor that philosophy and science repudiate; that we have abandoned the base on which the historical Church rested; and that in discarding its systematic divinity, its external supernaturalism, and its contempt for human nature and human life, we have really discarded Christianity itself, and that we ought to know it, confess it, and rejoice in it. We were long accustomed to hear this charge from the Orthodox world, and we resisted it with appeals to Scripture and with

historical criticism. We went behind the fathers to the apostles, and we finally went behind the greatest of the apostles to Jesus himself. We insisted that Paul should be interpreted by Christ, and not Christ by Paul; and that John should be made to agree with the synoptics, and not the synoptics with John; and so we made room for our liberal Unitarian faith, without going outside the record or leaving the foundation of Christ and the gospels. But after silencing or softening the assault upon our Christian faith and freedom from within the Church, which sought to drive us out when we would not go, we have since found ourselves subject to the more dangerous attack of the agnostics and positivists and pure theists who have honestly reasoned themselves out of the Church and out of Christianity, and who tell us they did it on our principles, and that if we were as logical, brave, consistent, and manly as they are, we should confess that we are not Christians and have no sympathy with and no connection with the historical Church.

There is a certain ground of truth in this complaint, and it is not to be treated with disrespect or derision, or by an appeal to religious prejudice; that is our temptation, and it is to be carefully avoided. If we are aiming, in any controversy with our theistical brethren, to cover ourselves from public suspicion or aversion, or to separate them out for distrust as spiritual lepers whom we will not company with, such a course is both weak and wicked, and no good will come of it. But if, in absolute

good faith and without regard to consequences, we feel that we are Christians and wish to be Christians and expect to continue Christians, and rejoice in our relation to the Church Universal, the historical Church, however it may feel or carry itself towards us, then we have a dignified position and a strong one, as I think, and we can maintain it with candor and calmness, and without any coldness towards those who choose to take a different course.

The late great Italian statesman Count Cavour a few years ago said he envied those who should live to see the opening of the next century, for they would probably behold the most interesting of all human experiences, the birth of a new religion. And this, I suppose, is the expectation vaguely shared by thousands of earnest minds who think Christianity has outlived its usefulness and must give way to some fresher form of faith. When we consider that the dogmatic system of the Church was for ages the most shaping and decisive scheme of thought about God and man, the past and the future, which the race had ever produced, and that even Aristotle, the idol of centuries, was claimed by Thomas Aquinas to be its advocate and defender; and when we see the dilapidated condition in which that old creed now stands, — we cannot wonder that Cavour, a Catholic, or that Strauss, a sceptical Protestant and finally a repudiator of Christianity, should have a considerable following of intellectual and sincere people who think Christianity is exhausted and must soon formally give place to a new

religion or none at all. I do not suppose Cavour anticipated another positive revelation or a new message from heaven; and certainly that is not what our objectors to the Christian name and faith generally expect. But they evidently think the heritage of the past, so far as Christian tradition and the faith of the Church are concerned, to be not a privilege, blessing, and help, but a hindrance and a burden. They have a serious fear lest their use of the Christian name and the Christian symbols, whether dogmatic or sacramental, should give false impressions of their actual state of mind; and this they aim to make impossible by disowning any Christian faith or title, and by substituting new symbols for Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is possible that a hundred years hence it may appear that some great service was rendered to religion by this unpopular and unselfish course; and certainly I wish to say nothing in reproach of it, nor will I allow any moral and spiritual fellowship with good men to be broken up by differences about words, or even by differences of opinion on the most important questions, so long as an evident love of truth and a plain conviction of duty animates their dissent. What I am now concerned to do is not to convince *them*, for that is seemingly hopeless, but to persuade and fortify you in the conviction that the best place for the free growth of truth, faith, and piety, and the best home of spiritual life, is still in the Church of Christ, and that it is our privilege and duty to claim our place in it and firmly to hold it, widening the ground, if

it cramps us, until we stand at ease there and make place for others to stand by our side. In short, in spite of great divergences of opinion from popular Christianity, I believe in the religion of Christ; and I believe in the Church that has handed it down, and claim to belong to the present and existing Christian Church, and to be no invader, nor spy, nor enemy in its camp, but a child in a father's house and a disciple at the master's feet.

What then is Christianity? and what are its true evidences? Is it in itself, or was it ever, truly represented by a system of dogmas, definite and fixed, prescribing exactly what men should think, believe, and say about the divine nature, the date and manner of the origin of our race, the cosmology of the world, unfolding a plan of salvation and giving men for their only escape from perdition faith in a metaphysical scheme dating from perplexities in the divine counsels caused by the first sin and the fall of man, followed by the curse, the mediation of the second person in a triune Godhead, and the redemption of such souls as accepted the atonement of Christ's blood? Far be it from me to speak lightly or irreverently of the heroic and plaintive efforts of the Christian Church of past ages to bring the facts and suggestions of Christ's life and death, and the history of the Jewish Church, into such intellectual and philosophic harmony as their times allowed; to make the teachings and life of Jesus into a theological scheme,—that is, to render them a subject of systematic thought. That is a necessity in

an intellectual being like man, and will continue such to the end of time. That the Church began with Paul to frame a theological system for Christianity, of which Jesus himself — a moral and spiritual, not a philosophic, teacher and inspirer — had no conception if the synoptical gospels are any sufficient guide to his modes of teaching, is only a proof that religion can never exist in any institutional form, or make any coherent or public headway, until it is mixed in with intellectual propositions and claims to have an answer for all the permanent problems of human experience. That is what Christian theology has attempted, from Paul's day to ours, and will continue resolutely to attempt until the world ceases. It is not too much to say that Paul's masterly interpretation of the import of Christ's mission and the significance of his life and death in the light of the best philosophy of his day and by the aid of one of the most exalted and fervent minds that ever lived, was, under God, the condition of the preservation of Christ's work and the historical foundation of the Christian Church. Paul organized the religion of Jesus into a scheme of theology, and by that means instituted the Church as a society capable of leaving its native soil and of being propagated in lands of thought and philosophy, in Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, and Rome. It was an enormous service, and his mighty work has in part survived the tremendous strain of centuries. The Epistle to the Romans has perhaps been the most influential theological treatise ever written by mortal pen. It did for the-

ology for fifteen hundred years what the Sermon on the Mount did for religion for all time. But, for the reason that religion is founded in the heart and conscience and will, and theology only in the mind, the Sermon on the Mount remains essentially unaffected by time, for the human heart is one in all ages; while Paul's theology has been variously interpreted, explained away, softened, modified, and mixed with modern philosophy, or discarded in favor of the original simplicity of Christ, of which we still happily have records that, however garbled, furnish an unmistakable portrait.

When the Church became a political force, and finally shared the throne of the Roman Empire, — a providential fact, — it hardened into positive and unbending forms certain hypotheses or inferences, mostly based on Paul's words, touching the nature of revelation, inspiration verbal and plenary, priestly orders, sacraments, and the doctrines of covenants and atonements, the incarnation, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and all its cognate and coherent theological dogmas; and it did it so well, and with such backings of civil power and such show of general consent by œcumenical councils, and by the aid of such potent master-spirits in philosophy as Augustine, that it may well be said that the philosophic thought, the logical power, and the political and social economy of the early ages, as well as its statesmanship, went into the creed and constitution of the Roman Church. The time has gone by when Protestant

hatred could regard the growth of that Church as due only to the power of Satan, or could assume or believe that anything other or better could have happened to Christianity, at the time, than to be married to civil imperialism and clothed in ecclesiastical dignity. We must abandon the idea of any ruling Providence in the affairs of humanity and its greatest interest, religion, if we disown the hand of God in the ages which consolidated, shaped, and stamped the Christian Church in the form it took on and kept for a thousand years and more, during which all the seeds were sown of the later and richer growths of our civilization. Those only whose thoughts of God's providence allow it no part in anything tentative, provisional, imperfect, or subject to growth and improvement, will fail to see his hand in the theological system which handed down in its rugged and now unshapely rind and crust the meat and milk of the Christian religion.

It is plain to the philosophic historian, at any rate, that the Providence that rules the world has boldly thrown the interests of religion and of Christianity in with the rest, to share the whole fortunes of humanity, the struggles of its mind, as well as its political and social endeavors, and that no element or factor in our human experience has been jealously cut off from reflecting its influence upon religious faith and feeling. In short, Christianity was planted in the world to take up the sap and juices of the world's life, and while itself working on the materials that nourished it, to have its own

shape and proportions influenced and modified by the materials themselves. The acorn contains the oak; but the soil in which it is planted largely influences its size, its proportions, and its color, while winds of heaven and light and air twist, by force or attraction, all its branches.

The religion of Christ is fixed in essence and spirit and trend; but its theology changes with time and occasion. Time and occasion — nay, providential necessity — created the theology and ecclesiastical system of the Roman Church; time and occasion greatly modified it when Protestantism was born of its mighty struggle. Time and occasion are producing a less abrupt but a more decisive change in its theology in the present century, — an irresistible and nearly universal change, but none the less providential, and none the less orderly and historical, than any that has preceded it. What I maintain is, that this change does not affect the identity of the Christian religion, nor give those who feel it most any reason for deserting the Christian base, and that the proper sense of the unity of history and of the connection of the succeeding with the preceding chapters in the life of civilization makes it to the last degree important to maintain the continuity of the Christian faith and the Christian Church. There are too many glorious and beautiful traditions of the Church Universal; too many saints and martyrs; too many signs of divinity in its hymns and prayers and festivals, in the mystic faith hid often in its harsh creeds, in the

meekness and patience and lovingkindness of the Christian saints and apostles of the past, — to make it anything less than a dangerous impoverishment of spiritual wealth to disown the hereditary connection and the direct descent of the freest modern Christianity from its historic ancestry in the Church of Christ.

As Jesus Christ did not frame the theology of the Church, — for its early and its long and obstinate form did not begin to shape itself until Jesus' lips were closed, — and it was left to man to construct the first system of theology, so the human mind must and will claim its right to enlarge, correct, modify, and adapt this system as it has ever been doing and will continue to do. But amid these great vicissitudes what has there been to change in the *religion* of Christ, and what has changed in it? Nothing. Has Jesus himself or his life and history, making all the necessary admissions of possible uncertainty in the records, lost anything most essential to and characteristic of his power and influence? What made him holy, divine, exceptional, and a master and lord to his disciples? Was it not his exceptional acquaintance with and nearness to God, his moral and spiritual exaltation, his sublime earnestness and self-forgetfulness, his calm and consistent confidence in himself as God's messenger and son and the founder of a kingdom of God on earth? And on what did this faith really rest? Was it mainly on the miracles he wrought? No; miracles were not rare nor imperative in those days. Magicians were

common, credulity was great, evil spirits were credited with the power of working marvels. It was because Christ's works, whatever they may have been or however natural to his wonderful personality, were works of love and pity, and because they were associated with his matchless spiritual insight and confidence, and with his immense and masterly superiority to his time and his followers, that they gave him their hearts and their faith and accepted and hailed him as the Messiah and the Saviour of the world?

The world is fast returning to the faith and confidence of the first disciples and synoptical biographers of Jesus. Whence this new, strange, and general interest in the human personality of Jesus? It is exactly what Christ's original biographers felt and have left photographed in their life-like narratives in the gospels. Paul, who had really hardly known Jesus in the flesh, shows little interest in his earthly life, knows nothing of his birth, and deals scarcely at all with his personal history, except as a disclosure of the spiritual purpose of God, from before ever the world was, through him to save the race from the original curse. How the theological system, beginning with Paul and growing into the creed of the historical Church, has been threatened, undermined, and made logically incredible by the discovery of the antiquity of the earth and of man, by the influence of the Copernican astronomy, by the growing confidence in the development theory of science, the better knowledge of other great eth-

nic religions, the new canons of literary criticism applied to the documents on which the old notions of revelation and verbal inspiration rested, — I need not stop to consider.

But is Christianity as a revelation of God's personality and fatherhood, as the chief witness for personal immortality, as the providential organizer of moral forces in the interests of humanity, to be abandoned or superseded because of the decay of the old theology which so long protected it and was so long mistaken for it or confounded with it? We might as well forsake the family idea and its sanctity and importance because in patriarchal times men had unrebukedly several wives and concubines, or because the Roman law gave a father unlimited power over the life of his own son. The family idea is original, vital, and divine; but it has had corruptions and abuses and extravagances, growing out of imperfect times, which might well subject it to the question of those who abandon Christianity because it has had great corruptions in its theology. The wonderful and divine thing about Christianity is its perpetual tendency to run itself clear of the impurities that have flowed into its channel and mixed with its waters. I do not say that this is not true of civilization itself, but civilization is of divine origin, and is under providential guidance. We do not expect to prove Christianity *more* divine than life, than human nature, or than the world's history. We only claim that it is evidently the religion on which peculiarly rests the blessing of God, which

best accomplishes the moral and spiritual progress of man, and that it is unlike all other forms and modes of faith in its essence and in its founder's life and character in not being subject to the limitations which have prevented all other religions from becoming universal and permanent.

Whole libraries have been written on the evidences of Christianity, their general aim being to prove, first, the genuineness and authenticity of the documents on which it is supposed to rest; next, to set forth the miraculous testimonies which convinced the apostolic witnesses of the supernatural character of Jesus and of his authority to communicate a direct revelation from God, for which they gladly suffered martyrdom. In reply to these evidences, doubters and sceptics have in all times, but notably in ours, urged objections based on universal facts of human nature and human history, showing that the scriptures of all religions have claimed a divine origin, and have easily intrenched themselves in the confidence of their receivers as inspired; that claims to the miraculous have been as common as they have been easily and rashly credited in all early ages; that martyrdoms and sufferings growing out of perfect faith have illustrated and borne witness to religions which we consider purely human in their origin and of the nature of popular superstitions; that the passage from the strange or exceptional to the marvellous, the miraculous, the supernatural, the divine, is a general experience in the records of all faiths, and belongs to the history of the human

mind rather than to Christian history; that the evidence for the unbroken uniformity of law in nature is too strong to make any claim to the miraculous (except in the sense of the strange and yet unexplained) credible. Added to these objections has been the weight of the new and powerful criticism that the learned scholarship of the last quarter of a century has brought to bear on the Old and New Testaments, as both being collections of books of doubtful dates and authorship, without claims to any supernatural origin, distinctly human in their character and fortunes, and to be treated like any other literature, being not self-coherent, more or less contradictory, and containing statements not historical, and even mutually destructive, besides having moral blemishes inconsistent with their claim to divine authorship.

But what if neither Judaism nor Christianity ever really rested upon the foundations which have been long called their evidences; what if they always rested simply on their *merits*, — their fitness to meet the religious wants of their times; what if the objections made to the old theories of their origin and the origin of their scriptures, to the miraculous element in them, should be granted, — should we not still be left with the facts, that both these religions have had a connected, a persistent, and a most decisive and all-important influence in shaping the fortunes and faith of the civilized world, and that in their literature, whatever its origin, we still find the most extraordinary food for our moral and spir-

itual sustenance, compared with which the choicest specimens culled from the literature of all ages fall into a lower place and fail to satisfy the religious wants of man? Some theory of the Bible adequate to account for its persistent hold on human affections we must still frame; some account of the obstinate place the old Hebrew ideas keep in the mind and heart of man. Some solid grounds, if not those hitherto trusted, must be assumed to exist for the pre-eminent place Christianity has held and still holds in spite of all modern destructive criticism of the old theories of its evidences. For Christianity is here, alive, and powerful, and really more alive and powerful than ever, if less distinct from the influence of the civilization and the public opinion it has created and characterized. Somehow Jesus Christ's account of God's fatherhood, his "God is love," his witness to personal immortality, his consecration of monogamy, his exaltation of the passive virtues, — meekness, long-suffering, forgiveness of enemies, — his estimate of prayer and communion with the Spirit of our spirits, his notions of the supreme importance of personal rectitude and piety, have got themselves installed in the mind, heart, and will of the race; are the governing and characteristic ideas and feelings in the more highly civilized families of humanity; have proved capable of overcoming all civilizations not pervaded by them; have shown themselves independent of climate and political diversities; have become the foundation of international law; constitute the essence of

what is now known as Humanity, or universal philanthropy; have largely overthrown absolutism in government, caste in social life, slavery and serfdom; and are still working to overcome or expel lust, intemperance, violence, and fraud from every country where they stay. Religions of other kinds have lasted as long, have had as wide an acceptance, and numbered as many disciples. But they have none of them favored anything except their own growth. Civilization has been dwarfed by their presence; they have superseded what is natural and wholesome in man's mind and heart. The peculiarity of Christianity is that, like its master and founder, who gave his life for the world, it does not exist for itself, but gives itself to and for the common interests of humanity, thrives and conquers, as justice, freedom, happiness, worth, truth, righteousness thrive and conquer; that it identifies itself with civilization, and leads and follows, follows and leads, as commerce, popular education, equal rights, and political and moral freedom may chance to be beforehand or behindhand as compared with its own positive faith and institutions. It may seem to lag behind, as it now seems to many to be behind, the light of the latest science; but it always catches up, and soon takes its place before, and is finally suspected of only seeming to follow, that it may the better lead. Besides, there is always a type of Christianity in the world—rarely popular or numerously represented—that is fully capable of assimilating the highest truths of science and phi-

losophy and making them tributary and subordinate to its Christian faith, though the Church Universal practically keeps a lower level, that it may more easily be reached by the people it is aiming first to win, and then to lift up.

Be sure, then, it is really upon its *merits* that Christianity rests. If it had not maintained that ground, all other kinds of evidences would long ago have broken down. Let its enemies crowd together and pile up the proofs of the inconsistencies, infirmities, persecutions, dogmatic extravagances, and incredible opinions or indefensible usages of the historic Church, and make of them as ugly and awful a heap as they can. It only redounds more to the strength of the constitution of Christ's religion that it has borne these sicknesses and survived the weight of these burdens and the sorrows of these scars, and come down to us, in spite of the perversities of its ignorant or imperfect supporters, its rash interpreters, its unreasoning defenders, in the purity and power with which it survives. What is the chaff to the wheat, or what the tares to the harvest? Let the Scriptures themselves be shown to be truly human; let all the assumed errors of chronology, of historic accuracy, of defective morality in the Old Testament, and of unfulfilled prophecies in both Testaments, be established, — how can it substantially change the recognized fact that we draw our only affecting theism, our only practical faith in a personal God who careth for his offspring and hears and answers prayer, from the Old Testa-

ment; that the immortal Psalms grow younger with time and articulate our modern devotion, not being superseded even by the New Testament; that Jesus Christ continues to interest and gather around him the affections and confidence and hopes of the race, and bids fair to become the only universally recognized master and lord of religion; and that immortality — now claimed as a faith older than either Judaism or Christianity, a doctrine of natural religion — still derives its chief charm and its most affecting witness from the resurrection of Christ? It is the extraordinary evidence that living Christianity affords of its vitality, of its unexhausted power and self-perpetuating energy, that furnishes the only indisputable proof of its divine origin. It is the survival of the fittest. For it is now plain that as its external claims to authority decline, its priestly pretensions abate, its ecclesiastical buttresses decay; as the supernatural assumptions of the Church become modest, as the dogmatic thorns of its creeds are blunted, its civil power abandoned, its tribunals stripped of persecuting power, its excommunications deemed harmless,— its real influence grows, love for it takes the place of the old fear, and reason comes in to repair and supply what incredulity or superstition have lost or ravelled out. I believe that Christianity was never really as powerful and popular as it is to-day, when every disbeliever is free to utter just his coarsest and most virulent despite of it; that it was never so fully credited in essence as now when it is most questioned in

detail; that the criticism of its history, destructive as it seems, is only making its bottom facts and truths more irresistibly known and felt.

And as to its external institutions, of which this church is a fresh evidence of the hold they have in your hearts, do they not rest on their *merits* too, and rest securely? What preserves to us that blessed boon, the Christian Sunday, in spite of the assaults its authority has received from anti-Sabbatarians, — often unanswerable as logical arguments? Is it not its wonderful adaptedness to human wánts, a fitness increasing with the growing pressure of life, and nowhere more emphatic than in our wasting, emulous, and urgent American life? And is public worship — deserted too often by professional and overworked men of affairs, statesmen, lawyers, doctors, and merchants, made optional by public opinion, and no longer considered as a positive test of morals, for many good men do not go to church — is public worship showing any signs of general decay, or any such indications of being outgrown and superfluous that we must prepare for its speedy demise and burial? My own conviction is that a single generation grown up in universal ignorance of public worship, and without direct inculcation of personal religion by the preached word, would occasion such a revulsion by its calamitous effect on morals, order, peace, honesty in trade, safety of human life, and decency in the relations of the sexes, in the vulgarizing of woman and the brutalizing of youth, that it would tempt the State to make

neglect of public worship a penal offence, and bring back something like the old New England police laws against Sabbath-breakers. Let us not forget that all our church-going is now voluntary, all our church-building and support of the ministry absolutely free from compulsion; and we may then realize how much more valuable and significant our modern and American faith in the external institutions of Christianity is than any State or civilly enforced, or tithed support the Church has elsewhere received. Nothing could long sustain the external institutions of religion in a country like ours after a general and growing conviction of their merits had departed. True, there is a change in the emphasis laid upon those merits; the churches no longer are resorted to as having a divine authority to open and shut the gates of mercy, and they will less and less be sought in that spirit. But as seats of moral and spiritual culture, as bonds of brotherhood, as places of public worship, as shrines of the memory and spirit of Jesus, as centres of Christian light and life, they will be more and more sustained, the more truly they are left to depend on their merits, their necessity, their usefulness in the eye of a true civilization and a true humanity.

No doubt the old claim for Christianity which separated it out from the general providence of God and made its authority depend upon its thoroughly exceptional character, which denied the divine teaching of nature and degraded the human soul,

to magnify its peculiar and exclusive claim as a religious guide, has been seriously challenged and rightfully resisted in our day. Butler, in his famous "Analogy," defended Christianity against the acute scepticism of his generation by proving that there were no difficulties in its plan or scope which did not equally mark the system of nature,—a somewhat curious method of vindicating a revelation which was looked to to account for and retrieve the alleged defects in the light and order of nature. But if on the old theory of revelation—which took Moses and Christ out of the order of nature and humanity and history, and established that venerable but decaying distinction between the secular and the sacred, the profane history and the sacred history of the world—we find ourselves defaulters, and more inclined to sympathize with Gibbon than with his critics when he brought down the thunders of the Church by his eloquent and powerful account of the natural causes for the growth of the Gospel, it is only because Butler's account of the analogy between nature and Christianity is strictly true, though for a reason he does not give; namely, because they are really parts of each other, and partake alike in those silences and reserves, suggestions and incomplete confidences, that mark Nature's speech and the speech of her greatest prophets. The value of revelation never lay in its supposed definiteness and finality,— nay, its difficulties are all associated with the preciseness and details on which its secondary prophets have so insisted, but which its primary ones have always

avoided. Revelation is no log-book of a voyager who has returned from an unknown land. It is the bolder, plainer utterance of the nearer vision of God which has been vouchsafed to purer, loftier, holier souls, the finest spirits' report of their communion with the Spirit of all spirits; and when this vision of God is, by some bound of a great soul, made clear and confident enough to be able to add a great illumination to the whole prospect of man's destiny, then the world gets its spiritual leader, its Moses, its Isaiah, its Christ. So rare is the conjunction of history and favoring circumstances with the consummate moral and spiritual sensibility of great souls, that revelation in that degree that makes epochs in history, and alone passes for the name, is the most infrequent of events. But it is none the less natural because we call it supernatural, and none the less supernatural because we call it natural; since one is only the intensive of the other, not its opposite, or in any way independent of it. The same is true of inspiration, which is the name for the highest and most exalted spiritual speech of human souls, —a speech no man can assume or command, because it comes from great elemental forces, and uses him instead of being used by him.

As we come to feel the awful depth and mystery of our nature and of the universe around us, we shall shrink from the confidence and presumption that sums up human destiny and God's plans in little systems of divinity. Christianity is no such epitome, though the Church has used it as such, and

it refuses to die because of its inability to satisfy Church interpretations or Church definitions. In Christ and the spirit he breathed, and in the moral and spiritual confidences he aroused and perpetuated, it is still an unexhausted fountain of light and life; and the historical Church has been and continues to be the chief and providential channel of its precious influence, despite the unsatisfactory account it usually gives of its authority, scope, and significance.

Christianity will soon be seen to be even greater, diviner, richer, and surer of its sway, than its loudest champions suppose. They encumber it with assumptions, bolster it with defences, deform it with claims it neither owns nor needs. If any one can conceive or anticipate the appearance of a soul holier, lovelier, or more spiritually illumined than Jesus, or one whose example, temper, faith, heroism, could be fitter to elevate and guide the moral and spiritual fortunes of humanity, he may expect with reason a new revelation and a new religion. But the universe must be rich indeed if it holds another soul like his.

Meanwhile we cling fondly, gratefully, and confidently to the hem of his garment. He is the nearest to God, the holiest history has handed down. The instincts of civilization have crystallized about him. The Church is the setting of the jewel that sheds its lustre far beyond its frame. But let us protect and strengthen the setting, and not disown it if it bears some marks of the antiquity in which its

earlier sections were made; for it holds up before new generations the splendor and glory of the one name that has hitherto had power to hold the reverence and confidence of the race, and to whose preeminence and rightful honor and mastership we can see no end.

Therefore we, in the midst of modern light and life, children of reason and sons of progress, do from our heart of hearts call him Master and Lord, and profess our unfeigned faith in his Church and in the historic vine which he planted. Therefore we dedicate this church to the worship of God in the name of Jesus Christ.

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